

**Ms. Nataša Stanisavljević**

**Commissioner for Refugees and Migration of the Republic of Serbia**

**115<sup>th</sup> Session of the IOM Council, November 26<sup>th</sup>, 2024.**

**Pre-recorded Statement**

Respected Chair, Director General, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

Migration is a topic with its global reach and effects felt not just over the physical and political borders but deeply affecting political, economic, security and social spheres of our daily lives. With nuclear proliferation and climate changes it is a topic of highest political consideration globally. And as such it requires comprehensive, whole-of-society, system-wide and multilateral and innovative solutions.

With the development of modern communications and innovative technologies the world is getting smaller and faster, much faster than our respective societies can adapt. Movement of peoples is a cause as much as the effect of these global changes and it is driven by many factors that have not just long term effects but require long term solutions through effective and efficient management.

We have already mapped these issues and begun to tackle them on a global scale through development of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, Global Compact on Refugees. Now it starts to be difficult, because it is required of us to try to find a common and joint implementation mechanisms to these challenges that affects us in different ways.

These differences, simplistic said, derive from the fact that our country, region, local community is a place of origin, transit or destination. However, global strive for economic development made migrations to be a necessary condition for development. On the other hand, it is producing problems for social cohesion as well as negatively affecting places of origin.

Serbia is a European country in development, that witnessed war, destruction, poverty and mass inflow of refugees and IDP's at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Serbia was and still is a home for over 600.000 refugees from Bosnia and Croatia and 200.000 IDP's from our Autonomous Province Kosovo and Metohija. Serbia successfully conducted the largest process of refugee integration in Europe after World war II.

In the last decade we are finally on our way of development and economic growth. We are a candidate country for the European Union, we are regional champions in attracting foreign direct

investments and from country with high unemployment we started to be a country that has a labor shortage.

In this respect Serbia now strives both at regional and national level to attract and achieve the positive effects of legal migration and combating illegal migration through various legal pathways through all-of-government approach. From a mere recipient Serbia became active contributor to regional economic and political initiatives such as the Berlin Process and Open Balkans, not only to promote economic and political cooperation but also to promote peace and development for all our neighbours.

Our existing legal framework foresees a simplified procedure to enable a foreigner to be employed and introduces a new, more flexible concept of employing foreigners, while protecting the domestic labour market. This has been achieved through the introduction of a single residence-work permit and the application procedure is fully digitalized. There are categories of foreigners that have the right to work without a single permit, i.e. a special case refers to foreigners who carry out innovative activities (start-up), foreigners who have Serbian origins, digital nomads, foreign talents, specific deficient professions. No special work permit is required for vulnerable categories of foreigners such as refugees. Assistance and easy access to ancillary services (social, health, employment, education) for foreigners in order to promote integration is being further developed. Working with our diaspora and effectively managing circular migration is how we see contributing to further local and regional development.

Harnessing international partnerships and cooperation with all relevant international government and non-government actors is a key to success, as our lasting and strong partnership with IOM and other UN and EU agencies have proved on numerous occasions.

It is clear that we need to have solutions having local, national and global effect and that is to make international legal order for managing safe, orderly and regular migrations through providing effective and sustainable legal pathways.

Thank you very much.