



# Republic of Serbia

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*General Debate*

**Statement by**

**H.E. Mr. Ivica Dačić  
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior**

*Geneva, 23 November 2009*

**Check against delivery**

Dear Director General Swing,  
Your Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to express my great professional and personal pleasure for the opportunity to be present at the opening of the work of the Council of the International Organization for Migration, and to wish you successful work on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Serbia.

At the beginning, I would like to underline the exceptional significance of the work of the International Organization for Migration in modern world. Success of certain country or society is today measured according to the destination level of finest experts, scientists, artists and other successful people, willing to leave their home societies in quest for better conditions for high achievements.

At the same time, the other extremity of migration, in which great number of people coercively leaves their homelands fearing for their own survival, imposes an obligation to the entire international community to help them.

Between these extremities, there is entire scope of circumstances under which people migrate and affect their own destiny but as well destiny of society, both the one they are leaving and the one in which they are seeking the opportunity for happiness.

Therefore, it is extremely important to support those multilateral forums which could provide professional, human and evenhanded assistance to the countries striving to manage migration movements.

Respectively, Republic of Serbia clearly supports the work of the International Organization for Migration, and I feel free to observe that our cooperation is very intensive, that projects we have been realizing are very useful, concrete and that they are being realized in the spirit of cooperation and trust.

Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Serbia and Office of the International Organization for Migration in Belgrade have initiated cooperation even in 2000, when first anti-trafficking programs and programs of assisted and volunteered return were established.

Ever since then we have been developing partnership within various projects, with an aim towards capacity building and strengthening of our police in order of its response to modern migration challenges. Up until today, IOM Belgrade provided assistance to **500 human trafficking victims, 233 irregular migrants found without assets, near 17.000 volunteer returnees** originated from Serbia (and Montenegro) and **56, 317 refugees** which moved abroad.

In addition, more than **870 police officers** and **400 students of the Police Academy** attended trainings within IOM projects. Training subjects involved investigation techniques in solving smugglings and human trafficking, establishing anti-trafficking system of giving directions, communicating with victims of human trafficking, knowing international protocols and human right standards etc.

I think that scope and contents of these projects are the best indicators showing that nearly for the past ten years we have developed excellent cooperation, for mutual pleasure. These, and also ongoing cooperation projects significantly contribute to development of our capacities regarding management of migration flows.

Migration is important, natural, inevitable and potentially useful part of overall economic and social life of every country. They are present in all regions of the world,

although the dominant ones are directed towards countries with higher standards of living.

I would therefore like to underline that the issue of legality or illegality of certain migration flows is highly conditioned by changes that happen in the field of politics, economy, safety, demography, as well through policy and practice of migrants' integration into certain societies.

For the past two decades, Republic of Serbia has been facing various migration waves that largely affected our economic resources, demography, safety, as well as entire social and cultural environment.

Thousands of young people, out of which large number with exceptional academic and professional potentials left our country during the nineties of the past century, in search for better life, running from social and economic crisis and isolation of at that time Yugoslavia.

At the same time, several hundreds of people looked for a shelter in Serbia, running from war conflicts in region. That's how more than half million refugees from Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina came to Serbia, and as consequence of the conflict in the territory of our southern province Kosovo and Metohija, more than 200.000 people are internally displaced and they found shelter in other parts of Serbia.

Republic of Serbia is **country with the highest number of internally displaced persons in Europe**. Number of refugees in the Republic of Serbia decreased for more than 80% in period between 1996 and 2008. So, **538.000** refugees and **72.000** endangered by war persons were registered during Refugees and other endangered by war persons census in 1996, and than **346.000** by Census in 2001 and **104.246** during Registration of refugees in 2004/25005.

Decrease in refugees' number is mostly a result of integration into the Republic of Serbia. More than 300.000 persons obtained nationality of the Republic of Serbia, which presents the largest integration process in Europe. Through the process of return, which was carried out followed by different success in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republic of Croatia (31% returnees in Bosnia and Herzegovina and 18% returnees in the Republic of Croatia), number of refugees was cut down for additional 149.000. It is also estimated that another 49.000 refugees found shelter in third countries.

By the end of May 2009, 86.154 refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republic of Croatia stayed at the Republic of Serbia. Out of this number, 75% constitute refugees from the Republic of Croatia.

Republic of Serbia has provided more than 250 million euros from its own budget for reception and accommodation of refugees. Greatest assistance in realizing these projects was provided by UNHCR. However, in the past few years, European Union through CARDS and IPA took over the leading role.

In addition, significant number of migrants transits through our country on their way towards European Union, in search of jobs, but using as well channels for illegal migration, or as victims of human trafficking.

So, all three basic forms of migration, used in typology of United Nations, reflect as well in migration within Republic of Serbia. Those are **regular migration, irregular migration and refugees' migration**.

However, it is obvious that in practice one cannot draw clear delimitation line between regular and irregular migration flows. When we talk about regular migration, where the status of migrants is legal economically and socially observed, they mostly refer to employment, organized or spontaneous, at foreign employers.

In the same way large number of people from Serbia in several migration waves in the other half of the past century searched for employment options in the countries of Western Europe..

Diaspora creates significant category of migrants, and Republic of Serbia, as well as many other European nations, has large Diaspora, both in Europe and in all other continents.

However, due to decreased possibilities for new regular employment during nineties, number of persons from at that time Federal Republic of Yugoslavia suddenly increased, which also included Republic of Serbia; those persons registered themselves as asylum seekers in European countries, but they were actually trying to solve the issue of their employment through asylum or refugee status.

Having in mind all stated circumstances, in the recent period the Government of the Republic of Serbia has been intensively working on establishing mechanisms for migration management on national level.

A need for a strategic approach has been observed that would unify management of work migration, resolving still opened issue of refugees and internally displaced persons, reintegration of refugees based on readmission agreement, as well as suppression of illegal migration including fight against human trafficking

Significant results have already been accomplished in this field, and I would like to mention that the dialog between Serbia and European Union regarding visa-free regime was of great assistance.

This process, and especially so-called Road Map for visa liberalization, i.e. system, concrete and clear reform criteria which it contains, then various meetings on experts levels, contributed that these issues get into focus of attention of all relevant participants, followed by coordination and leading role of the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Serbia.

What I would especially like to underline is that **great professional assistance of the International Organization for Migration**, which has been provided during this dialog, particularly **when it comes to work on strategic documents and planning of practical policy in this field**. Therefore, I am using this opportunity to thank the International Organization for Migration, and especially to all its representatives in IOM Office in Belgrade, for extremely professional and friendly cooperation.

As a result of all these activities, Serbia has complete strategic, judicial and institutionalized framework for migration management today, harmonized with international standards and examples of good practice of EU countries.

First of all, in July was adopted national **Strategy for Migration Management**, as an umbrella document in the entire national migration management system.

In addition, by the Decision of the Government of the Republic of Serbia **Coordination Body for Migration Monitoring and Management** was established. This Body, composed of nine ministers under which competencies are certain areas significant for migration management, shall provide unique policy and harmonized activities of competent ministries through directing of work of ministries and special organizations.

**Strategic approach** that we implemented in this area **has three objectives:**

- Establishment and implementation of mechanisms for overall and consistent monitoring of migration flows in the Republic of Serbia, through collecting and analyzing data on scope and flow of migration movements, including creation and continuous updating of Migration Profile of the Republic of Serbia;

- Completion of strategic, legal and institutionalized framework for unified migration management, and
- Protection of rights of migrants, creating conditions for integration and social inclusion, followed by awareness raising regarding migration significance.

Then, **Anti-trafficking Strategy and Action Plan** for its implementation were adopted, **Strategy to fight illegal migration for period 2009-2011**, Strategy for **reintegration of returnees** based on Readmission Agreement , and as especially important, having in mind concrete forms of both regular and irregular migration, **National Strategy for Promotion of Roma Position** in the Republic of Serbia.

**National Employment Strategy for the period 2005-2010** was adopted, founded on European employment strategy from 1997 and Lisbon EU strategy for the period 2000-2010, the Bucharest Declaration and EU employment recommendations; national objectives in majority of areas defined by EU are defined by it.

I would like to mention that the word is about modern and coherent strategic framework for practical acting of all competent institutions, as well as that special emphasis was put on necessity of proactive acting and prevention of illegal migration.

For instance, Strategy to fight illegal migration lays down conclusion of bilateral agreements on employment of workers in other countries; at the same time Action plan for suppression of human trafficking lays down popularization of legal possibilities for employment and work abroad.

At the same time, there is a need to promote communication towards citizens, to inform them regularly on opportunities for regular traveling aiming labor and employment, as well as to work actively on creation of new possibilities, either through framework interstate agreements or concrete time-limited programs.

So far, practice confirms that organized employment of workers, by conclusion of interstate, bilateral agreements on employment or general agreements with foreign employer on employment, is **the best way to manage migration, protect migrants and their family members**; therefore, it is necessary to increase this form of cooperation with countries in region and other European countries.

It is also necessary to continue cooperation with countries in region and move towards establishment of unique market for Western Balkan countries, taking care of characteristics of labor market of these countries and EU generally, national interest and protection of labor market during period of crisis.

Republic of Serbia shall certainly keep with its active partnership in this process. Necessary cooperation with the Former Federal Republic of Yugoslavia Republics when it comes to providing safety, social and other integration elements of returnees is particularly important for us.

That would primarily pertain to resolution of issues related to freedom of movement of people and workers amongst the countries which emerged on the territory of former Yugoslavia.

At the same time, we are ready to move towards the expected visa liberalization regime for our citizens who travel to the EU member counties and to discuss with our friends from Europe about all issues and consequences deriving from inclusion of Serbia in the White Schengen list.

I would particularly like to emphasize and reiterate our strong determination **to develop all forms of international police cooperation** including countries in the region,

EU member states and all agencies and institutions of EU, UN and other international organizations and programs.

However, I assume that an eventual approach, taken during deliberation of the migration issue, which would lead towards consideration of the security aspects of the phenomena, is wrong.

It is indisputable that security matters are among top priorities for our governments. Still, people feel original and natural need for movements, and all artificial obstacles that might impede their way are destined to failure. Consequences of these barriers reflect in spread of area for illegal migration and enhance demand for services of organized criminal groups.

Therefore, it is important to support work of the IOM as well as activities of the Global Migration Group which comprises 14 agencies of the UN system, work of the Global Forum for Migration and Development and all other multi-lateral approaches to this complex issue, so that interest of all actors could be evenly considered and, in principal, so that human dimension would not be lost, namely, in order to protect rights of the migrants themselves.

Finally, I would like to thank you, once again, for the invitation to attend the today's Council and wish you successful work.

Thank you for your attention.