

High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development
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Statement on behalf of the European Union

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(check against delivery)

Madame President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The Acceding Countries Bulgaria and Romania, the Candidate Countries Croatia* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia* the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this Statement.

With globalisation and significant demographic change we are facing a new era of international mobility. The need for dialogue and cooperation between governments and international organisations on migration and development has become more important than ever. In this dialogue we need to improve policy coherence between these two issues and to contribute to the development of holistic approaches and multi-sectoral responses towards international migration.

The European Union welcomes the organisation of the UN High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development (HLD) as a timely step. In this respect, the EU would like to express its sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his contribution to put the issue of migration on the global agenda. The EU firmly believes that the HLD can make an important contribution to helping participating countries and organisations make migration work better for development and is ready to play its part in making this happen. In preparing for the HLD the European Union has had intensive discussions and adopted a position that touches on many aspects that we will be addressing. This position has been made available to all delegations.

The European Union's migration policy includes a significant external dimension with comprehensive dialogue on migration related issues with a broad range of countries and regional organisations covering issues that include the linkage between migration and development. Partnership between countries of origin, transit and destination is a guiding principle for the EU in developing its policies. The Member States and the European Commission are also providing support to many countries to help them strengthen their capacity to manage migration and enhance the development benefits of migration.

Madame President,

The EU is convinced that migration, when managed effectively, can benefit substantially both the countries of origin and destination as well as the migrants themselves. The EU believes that aspects related to international migration need to become an integral part of the development agenda, and development issues likewise should be recognised as important elements of migration policies. Migration could also better contribute to development through the formulation and

* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process

implementation of comprehensive migration policies by countries of origin, transit and destination. Such policies can enhance the positive effects and minimize the negative consequences of migration.

The EU is strongly committed to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. It is certain that poverty reduction, improvement of education and health, and promotion of democracy, human rights and good governance - to name but a few - also help to address the root causes of migration. Every government should see it as their responsibility to create and sustain a society where their citizens, in particular the youth, can secure a livelihood and build a future. It must be a viable option to stay in one's own country. More consideration should be given to how migration issues can be integrated into the poverty reduction strategies and national development plans of the partner countries, and how donors can support partners' priorities in this respect.

The EU believes that there is an urgent need for increased policy coherence between various policy areas at global, regional and national levels. International migration cannot be addressed in isolation, as migration issues are strongly linked to a range of other policy issues such as trade and economy, employment, environment, health and security. It should be noted that the decisions on international policies on migration should not be based on economic aspects only, but also take into consideration the different social, political and cultural dimensions.

Madame President,

It is important to keep in mind that it is the migrants themselves, men and women, who make positive contributions both to their countries of origin as well as of destination. This role of diasporas needs to be facilitated in order to contribute to the sustainable development of their countries of origin through, for example, supporting diaspora networks, capacity building of diaspora organisations and enabling the temporary return of members of the diaspora. The EU believes it can learn from diasporas in its development cooperation and recognizes the effects of co-development projects.

The respect for human and labour rights of migrants is essential. The EU instruments are in this regard clear and unequivocal. Labour migration policies need to be supported by measures of integration including equal treatment and the prohibition of discrimination of any kind including social and economic rights, in order to prevent abusive practices and to promote decent and productive work for all migrants. Temporary migration is a phenomenon which has an increasing role due to the rapidly changing labour markets.

The integration of a gender perspective into migration and development policies and empowerment of women and girls is particularly important, as well as special attention to the youth. The contribution of migrant women to the economy and social well-being, as well as the risks they face, must be recognized and addressed properly.

The EU is committed to the full protection of the human rights of migrants, particularly of women and children. They should be paid special attention, in view of the fact that they may be exposed to particular challenges and risks because of their sex or age. The EU is also committed to taking firm action to protect migrants from violence, discrimination, trafficking, exploitation and abuse. The EU underlines the importance of the implementation and non-discriminatory application of the six core human rights instruments.

The fight against illegal migration and particularly against trafficking and smuggling of human beings is central to eradicating forced and bonded labor. States should enhance efforts to criminalize trafficking and smuggling in their national legislation and to punish the perpetrators of these crimes as well as to offer protection and rehabilitation to the victims of trafficking. The EU recognizes the importance of international legal instruments such as the UN Convention on Transnational Organised Crime in this regard.

The EU is willing to support programmes that provide more information on the risks of illegal migration and opportunities for legal migration. Potential migrants should be provided with up-to-date information about the risks of irregular migration and trafficking, and about changes in circumstances in countries of destination as well as origin. Moreover, the EU underlines the importance of international and regional agreements which provide for cooperation on migration including migration management, capacity building and return. In this regard, the EU underscores that effective return policies are required. All such returns should be undertaken in a manner that is safe, dignified and humane, with full respect of human rights.

Madame President,

It is necessary to build sufficient capacity in countries of origin and transit to formulate and implement migration policies that contribute to development, as part of their national development strategies. It is essential to listen to the needs of countries of origin and transit of migratory flows.

So called circular migration, as an aspect of an effectively managed migration policy, can play a useful role in fostering transfer of skills and knowledge to developing countries. It can increase resources for exchange of know-how, technology and institutional knowledge. Ways and means to facilitate circular migration should be promoted.

The EU emphasises that policy responses to brain drain need to be incorporated in development and migration strategies and tailored to specific needs and challenges of each affected country. These responses could consist of more ethical and disciplined recruitment policies which help to address push and pull factors of migration. One of the key issues in this respect is the health worker mobility, which needs to be addressed through comprehensive national policies as well as international agreements and action.

The EU agrees on the importance of remittances and is willing to facilitate efforts to enhance the development impact of remittances. First steps could involve lowering the transfer costs of remittances and increasing the reliability and efficiency of the transfers. Remittances should, however, not be seen as a substitute for Official Development Assistance (ODA). There are a number of best practices and lessons learned worldwide that could contribute to a further development of policies on remittances. We should also pay special attention to the nature and potential of social remittances.

Madame President,

The movement of refugees is a special case. Refugees enjoy a special legal status in accordance with international law. Protection of refugees and internally displaced persons form an integral part of migration policy. As states are on the one hand sovereign to decide who enters and stays in their territories, they must, on the other hand conduct these decisions in line with international law and obligations, among those the right to seek and enjoy asylum. Also, it should be noted that refugees, like migrants, can contribute economically, socially and culturally to the benefit of the receiving state.

Madame President,

The EU pays special attention to regional approaches. Migration and development are increasingly discussed with our Eastern, Mediterranean and African as well as ACP partners. The question is also on the agenda in the dialogue with Latin American and Asian partners. The regional Euro-African Conference on Migration and Development which was held in Rabat on 10-11 July 2006 was a success and a first step that should be seen with its constructive spirit and concrete results as a model for future cooperation. Migration and development are common concerns for Europe and Africa. We are looking forward to the EU-Africa and Euromed ministerial meetings on migration and development.

Participation of civil society and private sector organisations, including diaspora organisations, in migration and development is of vital importance; not least since they can play an important role especially in promoting integration and employment, preventing discrimination and strengthening good ethnic relations.

Madame President,

The EU believes that the High Level Dialogue should not be an end in itself but is rather part of a continuing process. The issue of the follow-up is therefore crucial.

Improved coordination between the various UN agencies and other international and regional organisations that deal with migration is essential. In this respect, the EU calls for a better use of existing UN institutions and processes and emphasizes the need for efficient work of the Global Migration Group (GMG).

The EU believes that a proposed Global Forum on migration and development can bring added value, provided that it is informal, voluntary, non-binding and driven

by interested UN Member States and participants. It should also be consultative and not produce negotiated outcomes. The Forum should focus its work on matters of priority and on issues where there is potential for achieving concrete progress regarding development, and taking into account experiences and good practices. Its work should be closely coordinated with the work of the Global Migration Group.

Madame President,

This Dialogue will start a process that brings effective and long-lasting responses to the challenges and opportunities of migration and development. The EU is ready to play an active role in the work of the Dialogue and its Round Tables, and in its follow-up.

Thank you, Madame President