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**A BONUS OR AN ONUS?  
MANAGING MIGRATION TO PROMOTE  
DEVELOPMENT**

*Check Against Delivery  
Seul le texte prononcé fait foi  
Es gilt das gesprochene Wort*

**Global Forum on Migration and Development  
Brussels, 10 July 2007**

Monseigneur,  
Prime Minister,  
Secretary General,  
Distinguished guests,

Let me begin by thanking the Belgian government for inviting me to address you today. Let me also congratulate the United Nations and the Belgium authorities for the interest and the commitment put in this very important forum. Migration is rising to the top of political agendas around the world, including here in Europe. So it is for me very important to witness the creation of this important forum.

Migration has been a feature of human society since the dawn of time. It has greatly enriched societies that were

willing and able to manage it in a profitable way. It can be a key element in ensuring economic prosperity.

Today, thanks to the energies unleashed by globalisation, we have seen a massive rise in the movement of goods, capital and services around the world. So it is also reasonable to expect the movement of people to continue.

Nor is there anything completely new in the levels of migration we are witnessing today. Around a hundred years ago, when there was no such thing as passports, or visas, or work permits, or the modern ways of transport, an earlier wave of globalisation led to an enormous expansion in trade and the movement of money and people. In fact,

according to many historians, there was even more cross-border migration during that period than there is now.

The important thing is to manage migration in ways that contribute to development, by maximising the benefits for the country of origin, the country of destination and, of course, most of all, for the migrants themselves, their families, their communities. To make sure that migration becomes a bonus not an onus: a bonus for development, and not an onus for all involved.

In other words, we must avoid disrupting the societies migrants leave, and ensure that migration is beneficial to the receiving society. Most of all, we must

never forget the human dimension of migration. Migration is about human dignity. Migration is also an issue of fundamental rights.

Let me look at each of these aspects in a little more detail.

Migration should be in the interest of the development of the countries of origin.

Migration can help to reduce unemployment, and support development through remittances, the transfer of knowledge, the upgrading of skills and the establishment of trade networks. This is the key challenge today: migration and development should interact in ways that mutually benefit both.

The European Union is taking the initiative in all these areas by supporting projects to reduce skills shortages in the health sector, by capacity building, by empowering migrants who want to invest in their countries of origin and by investing in the application of new technologies.

Nevertheless, confronted with the magnitude of the issues at stake, and indeed the human tragedy that we are witnessing nowadays, any effective development policy will also require us to explore new forms of managing migration. I mentioned this issue, recently in the summit of the African Union, in Accra, and I expect this to be one of the main topics of the EU/Africa

Summit, which will be held in December this year.

**Circular migration** could help prevent the catastrophic effects of a brain drain in the country of origin. It would allow migrants to reintegrate successfully into their home country, and contribute to its development with their new-found skills and knowledge.

Equally, **mobility partnerships** could provide the sort of innovative framework which would allow us to better organize cooperation between sending and receiving countries.

There are plenty of issues for such partnerships to consider. For example, many migrants maintain links with their

country of origin, and are often willing to go back for a shorter or longer period of time to help with its development. So why, in our world of increasing mobility, are there still so many obstacles to this kind of positive movement?

More also needs to be done to make remittances safe and reliable, and to enhance their contribution to development. However, what about the down-sides? What are the consequences of remittances on the economic development of a country? Are the advantages evenly spread? What does it do to inflation?

These concepts should all be used as instruments to enhance and improve the

dialogue between developing and developed countries.

But migration should also meet the expectations of the receiving countries.

Most developed countries need inward migration. Europe, for example, is faced with a demographic challenge that will have a substantial impact at least in the next 20 years.

Labour needs will increase across the board: Europe will need highly-skilled students and researchers. And it will also need people to plug gaps in agriculture, construction, social sectors and health systems, in particular.

Finally, the hopes and needs of migrants themselves must be met. And

here, integration is of key importance. Becoming permanent and accepted members of their new society is essential for stable and secure communities. Integration is an active, two-way process. Immigrants need to adjust to their new societies but those societies should also welcome them.

Putting people first also applies to those in need of international protection. Giving protection to those who flee in fear of their safety is our collective legal and moral responsibility, within our countries as well as without.

Recently, refugee numbers had been declining steadily on a global basis. But by the end of 2006, the figure soared to 9.9 million, the highest in five years.

That meant an increase of some 1.2 million refugees in 12 months. Here in Europe, after years of decline, we saw the number of asylum seekers rise by 6% last year.

Europe needs to abide by its long humanitarian tradition, and we are taking steps to establish a common European asylum system by 2010.

Protecting migrants also means addressing the dark side of migration. Illegal migration and trafficking in human beings have probably never been as big a problem as they are today, a human tragedy of great dimension. We need to work on an international level to address these issues and clamp down on those who profit from human suffering.

This requires closer cooperation between countries of origin, transit and destination. We need to do more to demonstrate that illegal migration is not the way, that it is a hazardous undertaking and leads to human exploitation.

We need to make people aware of this in their countries of origin and we need to take care of those who are stranded in transit countries.

Destination countries should also take more responsibility and address the pull factors that attract illegal migrants. It is time to get tough with employers who use and exploit illegals, and we should step up our control efforts. The

Commission has recently put forward a proposal for European legislation aiming at criminalising employers employing illegal migrants.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Thanks to increased international migration, different regions and even continents are becoming more and more interconnected. We are all confronted with the global opportunities this presents, but also the global challenges.

We need a framework to better understand what is happening and to explore ways to make migration work in the interest of all countries, as well as migrants and their families.

This framework should allow intensive dialogue and co-operation between countries. Indeed dialogue with third countries has been at the heart of the European Union's approach since it started engaging in migration policy eight years ago.

But it should also allow an integrated approach, developing internal and external aspects of migration policy at the same time, and in a comprehensive manner. This means taking account of development policy of course, but also policies covering justice and home affairs, social affairs and employment. It should indeed be a truly integrated policy. This is the reason why it appears so challenging to shape and implement it.

I'm convinced that the Global Forum will prove invaluable in creating this framework. It will allow us to look at migration and development issues from a global perspective, and ask the sort of fundamental questions that unlock whole new perspectives on the issues.

And what about the future of the Forum? Migration and development have many facets and are linked to other policy areas. Maybe we should give consideration to linking migration much more closely to the Millennium Development Goals. This could provide an anchor that would guide our efforts.

Getting it right is vital, because migration is a defining issue for this

early part of the 21st century. It is not a new phenomenon in Europe, but what is new is Europe's will to build a collective capacity to manage it.

Europeans understand that migration, like climate change and other challenges facing us, is an issue we need to confront together. No nation can find sustainable solutions on its own. We have built an open economy and territory within Europe, and therefore need common border management, immigration and visa policies. It is absurd that in a common space of free circulation of persons we have 27 migration policies. And we need also solidarity between EU Member States, when some of the members, as it

happened recently, are confronted with unexpected and urgent challenges.

This is a new frontier for the EU and we have spent the last decade gradually establishing the foundations of these common policies. Now it is time to move up a gear, and make migration work for all concerned: migrants themselves and our own countries, as well as those of origin and destination.

This requires sustained efforts in all the policy areas I have mentioned. The Commission is ready to meet the challenge with the support of the other European institutions, the Member States and our international partners.

There are no easy answers in the field of migration and development. But there are important questions. This forum marks a first step towards tackling those questions in an integrated way, and you can rely on the European Commission's full support in your endeavours.

Thank you.