



Remarks by Ms. Nahima Lanjri
Chair of the OSCE PA Ad Hoc Committee on Migration

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Dear President

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the year which has passed since I had the honor to take over as Chair, the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration has continued to pursue its mandate to serve as a focal point for the OSCE PA's work in the field of migration.

In its second year of activity, the Committee has paid special attention to a particularly vulnerable group of migrants, namely **unaccompanied and separated children**. The resolution "Minors on the Move" which was adopted last year as part of the Berlin Declaration, underlines the need to harmonize procedures, develop common guidelines and share responsibilities with respect to unaccompanied and separated children. I hope that you have found inspiration in the recommendations put forth.

Visit to Sweden and Denmark (21-23 October 2018)

Last October, together with seven members of the Committee, I travelled to Sweden and Denmark to assess current developments in the field of migration and asylum policy as well as border policies.

I wish to thank OSCE PA Vice-President and Committee Member Margareta Cederfelt, and the Head of the Danish delegation to the OSCE PA Peter Juel Jensen and their staff for putting together an intensive and excellent visit.

It was quite interesting to evaluate the impact which more restrictive migration and border policies (adopted in the wake of the influx of 2015) have had as well as the new policy dilemmas which have arisen.

To give an example, the delegation visited a return center north of Copenhagen where about 250 families, including 100 children, are accommodated. The majority are rejected asylum seekers who do not want to return to their home countries and cannot be forcibly returned due to the lack of a bilateral agreements or for other reasons. Many of the residents have been living there for months, even years.

The issue of **access to education** of these children was one concern. Some of them had been attending local schools before they were moved to the return center where the only educational opportunity is a school run by the Danish Red Cross. The **best interests of the child** should always guide policy. No child should be punished for the decisions made by their parents.

Denmark is certainly not the only country faced with the difficult task of how to enforce asylum decisions and encourage rejected asylum seekers to

return of their own free will while respecting its international human rights obligations.

The Committee also remains committed to sharing 'best practices' in the field of integration. A substantial part of our discussions in Sweden and Denmark last October was devoted to measures to facilitate the **access of asylum-seekers and refugees to the labour market.**

The Swedish authorities are doing commendable work through mandatory **introduction programmes** designed to promote a quick and efficient introduction of refugees in the labour market.

Sweden also has a '**fast track**' **procedure** aiming to speed up the entry of skilled migrants in professions characterized by a labour shortage.

Key to the success of these initiatives is the multi-stakeholder involvement: the **tri-partite co-operation** between government, trade unions and employers' organizations and co-operation between the public and the private sectors to help migrants start their own business. The **engagement of local government actors** has also been a key factor.

Integration was also on the agenda of the Committee's meeting yesterday where ODIHR presented two manuals, one highlighting 'good practices' at all stages of the migrant integration process, the other presenting a review of 'good practices' at the local level. ODIHR has done excellent work in this area and I hope that these documents will inspire our Members.

The Global Compact

At the Committee's meeting yesterday, Committee members together with the heads of the IOM and UNHCR offices in Vienna, engaged in a discussion on the **Global compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration**, how it relates to the **Global Compact on Refugees**, and the role which parliamentarians can play in implementation and review.

Much work remains to be done to inform citizens about the content and aims of these compacts and in countering the misinformation which has surrounded the Migration Compact in particular.

Migration hot spots

There are certainly many **'hot spots'** throughout the OSCE area which warrant our attention.

We continue to monitor the situation in the **Central Mediterranean** where, in the absence of a clear regional disembarkation policy, each disembarkation is negotiated individually. Whether the policy of imposing legal and logistical constraints on search and rescue will act as a deterrent in the longer term remains to be seen. The immediate effect, according to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, has been an increase in deaths at sea.

In 2018, we witnessed a clear shift from Italy to **Spain** as the main destination of irregular arrivals across the Mediterranean, confirming a trend which began already in 2017.

We are also seeing in a number of OSCE border regions the practice of limiting the numbers of asylum-seekers which can formally apply at border crossings, and **'push backs'** or returning asylum seekers to the transit country, potentially exposing them to harm. Allow me to recall here Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: "Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution." The right to apply for asylum does not depend on whether one has arrived by legal or illegal means.

Next Steps

The Committee will travel to Brussels in the coming months to learn more about **return policies** and the current status of proposals for reforming the EU Return Directive. Indeed, an **effective and humane return policy** is a key element of a comprehensive migration policy.

Let me thank once again all the members of the Committee for their dedication and continued engagement. I look forward to reporting to you at the Annual Session in Luxembourg next July.