



HELLENIC REPUBLIC  
MINISTRY OF INTERIOR, DECENTRALIZATION  
AND E-GOVERNANCE



**OPENING ADDRESS OF MINISTER OF INTERIOR, DECENTRALIZATION  
AND E-GOVERNANCE, Mr. GIANNIS N. RAGKOUSIS  
AT THE THIRD GLOBAL FORUM ON MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT  
ATHENS, 4 NOVEMBER 2009**

Your Excellency, the President of the Hellenic Republic, Excellency, Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr. Minister, participants, ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to welcome you to this Athens meeting, which is taking place under the Greek presidency of the Global Forum on Migration and Development.

Greece has lived and is continuing to live at first hand the meaning of migration, in economic and social development.

We were a source of migrants in the past, but now we are a country which receives migrants, so we have seen it from both sides.

There was an initial shock in the turnaround in these roles, and we are now I think in a position to look at the right way of bringing about using migration towards development. There is no doubt, friends, that the implementation of migration policies, particularly in the framework of development strategies, means that we have to be able to control the flows on the basis of certain general criteria from the country of origin.

In terms of current-day migrant flows, flows into developed countries, particularly in Europe, our country first and foremost, these hinge on various choices, because increasingly we are talking about people who leave on a mass basis from their homes, not only to find a better life and improve the lives of those people they leave behind. What we are seeing is people who are leaving their homes to get away from a situation which is no

longer bearable, because of climate change for example, or maybe because there has been economic collapse, and that has led to an impossible position in the countries from which they come.

And so they arrive with no papers, and very often they are the victims of criminal trafficking networks.

It means that because they have lost their papers or they don't bring them they can't be sent back, which means that increasing numbers of people are living now on the fringes of our society.

Now, there is no doubt that this has certain very unfortunate effects across the board, and particularly in terms of the economic development of all of these states. There can be no doubt that obviously these conditions, which encourage the development of criminal trafficking networks and the exploitation of individuals, I think also affect in particular certain groups in society, particularly children and women.

And these obviously lead to an increase in both legal and illegal migrants, and have also triggered further xenophobia.

Now, it would seem then that migration can bring effects in terms of development as well, but the current-day global financial crisis I think also means that this is even further worsened.

So really it is essential now that we take another look at our development strategies, and start now to focus them on the actual root of what is happening.

Obviously, at the same time we also have to look at the consequences in terms of integration of legal migrants, and also the economic situation in the countries of destination.

Greece today obviously is faced, from a policing point of view, with certain issues here as well, because you would need to apply strict policing, some people say. But I think that this very soon starts to clash with fundamental values, which exist in our countries.

But from a practical point of view as well it is ineffective, and this is why Greece now is striving to combat the criminal networks, the people who are trafficking in these human beings. And we are going to throw all of our

efforts into this, also with international cooperation, because we feel that finally allowing legal migrants in, but also the development prospects are not established on the basis of policing methods but rather on diplomatic methods, negotiation, which can be brought into line with the respect of the human rights of all citizens.

We are going, first and foremost, to strive to protect the position of the legal migrants in our country. That means that we have to strengthen the security for them, because we are going to have flexible procedures as well, and also the release and issuing of papers for them.

Now, obviously we have generations now being born and growing up amongst us, and they should enjoy full rights as Greek citizens.

The second thrust in our work will be to work in line with the provisions of our Constitution and international conventions as well, so that we can tackle the situation of all the aliens in our country with no papers, because obviously we want to ensure that legal migrants may come in. We want to bring about development, and we need to root out the dark side, the illegal side, because this undermines the economic and financial side of development as well.

So we have decided to set up a coordination centre to implement our policies for migration. And we are going to use empirical studies and scientific studies to work on this as well.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are setting up a modern method, a system for protecting our modern-day state and supporting migrants as well, on the basis of proposals to bring them in line with our democratic values.

We want to create a secure environment on the basis of this, for both citizens and migrants in the country of destination, but also we want to help bring about development of the countries of destination, and in the long run also of the countries of origin.

But always, always the aim will have to be international cooperation, because these are not national issues. These are global issues, and in the case of Greece these are major common European problems. Thank you.