



**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

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EU Home Affairs Commissioner

## **Unlocking the potential of migration for inclusive development**

Global Forum on Migration and Development  
**Stockholm, 15 May 2014**

Dear Chair, your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Seven months ago in New York, we took important steps during the UN High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development.

We recognised that human mobility was a key factor for sustainable development.

We stressed the importance of safeguarding the rights of all migrants.

We discussed how to deepen the interaction between governments and civil society as we try to respond to the challenges and opportunities of international migration.

In short, we succeeded in setting an ambitious political agenda.

Now it's time to turn good intentions into real changes for real people.

I strongly believe the Global Forum is best placed to make this happen. The Forum has already proved it can organise open and frank discussion. It meets regularly and brings together all the important players.

And of course the European Commission is ready to help.

I want to make just 4 points:

### **1. Migration and development**

First, on migration and development. The international community has pledged to put people at the centre of the post-2015 development agenda. There are an estimated 1 billion people affected by migration, either because they are migrants or because they depend on relatives who are.

To me, migration is the untapped engine for economic and social development. It is one of the most effective ways of alleviating poverty. It contributes to sustainable development and fits squarely into the scope of the next development agenda.

I was therefore extremely pleased that this was recognized by the EU-Africa Summit last month that send out a clear call to insert migration into the post 2015-development agenda.

The post-2015 development agenda **MUST** create the conditions for sustained, meaningful global partnerships on migration and human mobility. Our Forum should send that message loud and clear!

## **2. The economic and financial side of human mobility**

My second point is on the economic and financial side of human mobility.

Throughout history, migrants from all over the globe have played a role in developing our economies. Migration has kept our workforce vibrant and dynamic.

In the UN context, we are working on many different aspects of facilitating economic mobility, like the portability of rights, recognition of diplomas, ethical recruitment, circular migration and social rights. I highly appreciate the work done by the Global Forum, Peter Sutherland and his team and the GMG. The debate with civil society also provides important insights.

But I fully share the view of the Swedish Presidency that we have to step up our efforts. I believe we should create a framework that brings together different aspects that are often inter-linked.

We need a framework that allows us to improve the way we structure our work.

That is why I think we should consider setting a global agenda for economic mobility.

A Global Agenda would enable us to promote transparent international labour movement.

It would help us in addressing unnecessary bureaucratic barriers migrants face, so that they can move more easily to countries where they are needed, to countries where they and their host countries both have opportunities.

Setting a global agenda for economic mobility means we need a long-term vision and that we should test new ideas.

In the European Union we have developed some practical ways of facilitating the movement of people among our 28 countries.

Let me share a few examples, just as food for thought.

First, we need to make better use of the skills and qualifications that migrants in our countries already have. We have to stop wasting human resources and allow people to make best use of their talents.

That is why a system of mutual recognition of educational attainments and acquired skills, based on comparable standards would be useful.

That is why we have set up Europe-wide credit systems. Thanks to these systems, a person's credits from universities or from vocational training can be recognised throughout all 28 European Member States.

Now think about such a system at global level. Think about the benefits it could bring for a migrant if they could have their qualifications and skills recognised in the country to which they move, even if they cannot speak the language at first.

Could we start thinking about a common international qualifications framework? Could we start this for a few selected professions and extend this as we go?

In the EU we are also working on making the job application process easier.

For employers looking for good candidates, getting CVs is often the first step. But different formats make it difficult to compare CVs from different countries.

That is why we created the Europass CV. It organises information systematically, along with the European Skills Passport. Using this 'online folder', people can upload files such as diplomas. The system enables EU citizens to compile a transparent overview of their skills and qualifications.

Job seekers improve their chances of finding the right job or training, while employers find it easier to identify applicants with the right qualifications.

I know it may sound ambitious, but could we work towards a similar system at global level? Could we imagine a Universal Skills passport?

I am sure that in close cooperation with states, business and employment agencies these ideas could be explored further.

### **3. Cutting costs**

My third point deals with cutting costs of mobility and in particular on visa.

Today, too many potential students, researchers and visitors, from both the developed and the developing world, are discouraged from seizing opportunities abroad because of administrative hurdles and the costs of obtaining a visa.

Why do people who have already been granted a visa have to apply time and time again?

Why do bona fide people who want to visit a country regularly have to pay such high fees?

Such hurdles have no place in the 21st century's organisation of human mobility.

Where possible, we need to do away with barriers that limit the development of people, that limit the development of countries.

That is why, as European Commissioner, abolishing short-term visas is one of my priorities.

In recent years, we have made important progress and removed the short-term visa obligation for several countries.

But, here too, we need to be much more ambitious.

That is why, on 1 April, I proposed speeding up and streamlining procedures for people wanting to come to the EU. The changes will mean visa applicants won't have to go through cumbersome, costly procedures over and over again.

In practical terms, the Commission proposes to issue multi-entry visa with a validity of up to 5 years to people who travel to the EU regularly. We will also reduce the number of documents that need to be provided and applicants will get a decision faster.

I also propose more flexibility for doing away with visa fees altogether for certain categories of people, such as minors and students. And I proposed making more use of modern technology so that applications can be made online.

I am convinced these proposals will do much to open up new possibilities for those wanting to come to Europe, knowing that many developing countries are still on the visa list.

## **4. Remittances**

When cutting costs, we also must pay attention to remittances.

In New York, we agreed that more needs to be done to make transfers cheaper, faster and safer at both ends of each transaction. Thanks to international efforts, the cost of making remittances has gone down, but here too we must do better.

Fees for transfers, especially to Africa, are still too high — averaging around 12 per cent. There are reports that companies make millions of EURO profits on remittance transfers.

If that is true, there is something very wrong with the system.

So let's work together to bring down those charges. Let's promote significant changes — in banking regulations, in the practices of money transfer operators and in approaches to new technology.

And again, I am pleased to report progress in the area too. The Commission, in close partnership with the African Union, the World Bank, the African Development and the IOM have reached agreement on creating the African Institute for Remittances, the first of its kind in the world. This has great potential in terms of harnessing Diaspora resources for social and economic development in Africa.

The decision to create the institute has been made. It will be hosted in Kenya and should be fully operational in 2015.

## **5. Migrant rights**

My final point is about migrant rights.

In New York, we emphasised the need to respect and promote international labour standards, and to respect the rights of migrants in their workplaces.

There were calls for the ratification of the Domestic Workers Convention. The Commission is urging EU Member States to ratify this instrument as soon as possible. Some have already done so, and let me use this occasion to encourage the others to follow suit. I do hope that all will have ratified this Convention by 2015.

I am pleased that the EU has made progress on protecting migrant rights and in particular of seasonal workers. Seasonal workers make an important contribution to the European economy. Yet, too often, they find themselves in vulnerable situations, exposed to exploitation.

I have been working hard to improve their status and important legislation was adopted in February. The Seasonal Workers' Directive now provides for common entry and residence conditions and seasonal migrants will enjoy a better level of protection throughout the European Union.

## **6. Concluding remarks**

Ladies and Gentlemen, let me conclude.

I would like to thank the Swedish Chairmanship of this Forum for your energy, imagination and dedication. Let me wish you, Eva, good luck in guiding us through our work, knowing your passion when it comes to this issue.

Let us work together to realise the potential of migration as an engine for development.

Let us step up our efforts and help migrants to make the most of their capacity to enrich our societies and contribute to our economies.

I wish you all a most constructive session of the Forum.