



BELGIUM

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Johan Verbeke,
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United Nations**

**High-level Dialogue on Migration and
Development**

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Madame President,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen

I would like to thank and congratulate the Secretary General for having taken the initiative to organize this Dialogue and to his Special Representative for having prepared it so well.

This initiative gives evidence of vision and courage: nobody could actually foresee in 2003, when the decision for this Dialogue was taken, that only three years later, migration would make the headlines of the papers and television almost every day. The tragic images that are presented to us by the media show that the Migration issue has been absent from the global political agenda for much too long. It is therefore high time that the international community and its members, in other words that we, the State representatives, face up to our responsibilities.

I would also like to raise the following remark: the migratory fluxes are developing in diverse directions, South-North, but also South-South, which means that countries that already face serious development problems are confronted with new challenges that are particularly difficult to overcome.

The debates organized by the Global Commission on International Migration and the regional consultation that took place during the years 2003-2005, have been an important catalyst to carry the debate to a political level. We are more and more aware of the fact that the globalization of the world, the tremendous development of the means of transport and communication as well as the persistence of considerable inequalities in the economic, political and social field, contribute to the acceleration of the international Migration process, a process that, when badly administered, often drifts off to disastrous, yes even inhuman, conditions.

These irregular migratory movements sometimes create fears in the destination countries, with regard to disfunctioning of the job market, but also with regard to the respect, by the migrants, for the political and societal values that we consider being fundamental.

We have a common interest towards this observation, to determine a global and balanced approach, by taking the multiple dimensions of Migration into account. We need to install a coherent set of short-, middle- and long-term actions and policies that fall under the competence of different actors:

- In the short term : we need to display more efforts for the dissuasion of illegal migration by spreading objective information and increased awareness as to the risks of human trafficking that are inherent to irregular migration. The dissuasion also needs to take place by means of increased control of the borders, by the negotiation of a readmission agreement and by the fight against trafficking of human beings ;
- In the medium term: we need to better incorporate the migration dimension into our cooperation policies. This means to promote a favourable environment for development in the countries of origin of migration, examining how migration can contribute to the realization of the Millennium Goals, how migration can be included in the poverty reduction programmes, how migration needs to be handled in order to be directed into a source of enrichment and not of impoverishment for the countries of the South, due to the brain drain, for example.
- In the long term: make the international politics regarding migration, international trade and agriculture more coherent with our development goals.

The conference that Belgium organized in March in Brussels, in collaboration with the IOM, the World Bank and the European Commission, attended by many amongst you present today, has shed light on these questions and has permitted to outline some ways to answer them.

We have in this respect reaffirmed that a well managed migration can benefice the countries of origin, the countries of destination and the migrants themselves. The work of the Conference of Brussels has in this respect been significant. It has highlighted the need of cooperation between all the parties, including the civil society. It has emphasized the precious role that the Diaspora communities can play in favour of their country of origin. Another obviousness that has been repeated in Brussels they are however evidences that should be reiterated – is that we will not achieve anything if we do not treat the migratory phenomena in a spirit of partnership between all the countries involved.

At the end of this High Level Dialogue, there are some priorities I believe we should deal with.

These priority fields are:

- In the first place, data collection: the Global Migration Group but also other institutions like the OECD (Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development) should tackle this issue immediately : we can not develop credible policies without more reliable data on the migratory fluxes,
- We should then examine the consequences of the globalization on the job market and on the democratization of education. How can all the countries be better prepared to benefit from this irreversible phenomenon, not only through a better balance of supply and demand on the international job market, but also through a reinforcement of the countries' capacity, especially of the developing countries, to keep the most dynamic elements of their society, by the creation of a economic, political, scientific and social environment.

- The contribution of migration to the MDG and more particular the role of migrant communities who generate transfers by means of social contributions, but also in the cultural, financial and economic field, should also be examined more closely. This opens certain working sites: the one of the mobilization of transfers in favour of development by the creation of suitable credit instruments, in the first place the micro credit, an appropriate legislation on the protection of goods and the reinforcement of confidence in the local financial systems. Moreover, the creation of pension funds for the migrants and productive investments, and I am delighted to see that the UNDP has already started a reflection regarding this subject.
- Besides the transfers, there is the question of the voluntary return of persons. The investigations of the OECD have shown that, up until now, and although objectively praiseworthy, some of our co-development policies still didn't really succeed in turning these returns into development opportunities. Together, we need to redefine co-development as a true development move. I also propose, in this respect, the creation of a co-development fund on a European level.
- The contribution of migrants in social terms to their countries of origin and destination needs to be increased in value. This creates the question of the integration and the migrants' rights.

As we can notice, this is a far-reaching program that can only be realized when the international community and all its actors mobilize themselves, in other words, the governments, but also the competent international organizations, the private sector, the Diaspora and the civil society of the countries of origin and destination. We are delighted, in this respect that the Secretary General and his Representative have suggested to install a permanent process of dialogue and cooperation under the form of a Global Forum for Migration and Development.

Our recent experiences in the preparatory phase of this dialogue in Brussels and in Rabat have shown that the international community has achieved the necessary maturity to have talks on Migration and development in a constructive, innovative and inspiring way. Belgium is ready to take up this challenge and to accept the organization of the first forum sometime next year in Brussels.

I thank you for your attention.