

Esteemed Participants,

Representatives of participating governments in the WBalkans
 Representatives of governments contributing to this endeavour, of the European Commission, and
 of International Organizations

It is my pleasure, on behalf of the Czech Presidency of the EU, to contribute a few remarks to
 conclude the proceedings of the workshop on Labour Migration Policies in Countries of Origin and
 Destination and international Collaboration in the Western Balkans.

The workshop is part of the activities foreseen in the EC AENEAS 2006 project “Capacity Building,
 Information and Awareness Raising Towards Promoting Orderly Migration in the Western
 Balkans” in which most of you present here today are contributing to as stakeholders.

I note with interest that the workshop has proceeded over the course of the last day and a half
 at a brisk pace, following its opening by the Albanian Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal
 Opportunities, donor representatives and international organizations, around the structure of the
 IOM - OSCE – ILO handbook on Establishing Labour Migration Policies in Countries of Origin
 and Destination, which has continuously been referred to in the course of the presentations.

Sessions were held on:

- The International Legal Framework for the Protection of Migrant Workers,
- Respective countries’ presentations on policy Responses by Countries of Origin and of
 Destination of Labour Migration,
- working groups were held on collaboration between government agencies on labour migration, as
 well as on bilateral labour agreements.

Issues touched upon included the challenges of providing protection to all migrant workers
 whilst at the same time ensuring sustainable and equitable labour market conditions in both origin
 and destination countries; the impact of irregular migration and the challenges of managing regular
 migration flows; and I am personally interested to hear, the constructive role that countries consular
 representations abroad can make in assessing labour migration trends, and protecting respective
 migrant workers. Also, of course, proceedings have been punctuated by the effects of the global
 financial downturn on migration, though as yet evidence is contradictory. Given that migration, and
 labour migration in particular, is an integral part of today’s global economic, political and social life,
 flexible, specific approaches will be needed to effectively manage migration, and such policies are
 all the more pertinent in an economic downturn.

Yet, as remarked by several of you as participating government representatives,
 your respective labour migration administrations are in the making – and can benefit from
 international experience to-date. It is our hope that this workshop has contributed to providing
 inputs and future directions to this development process, as will the forthcoming country specific
 training sessions on the OSCE ILO IOM Labour Migration Handbook in each of the participating
 countries as foreseen by the project - the one for Albania being scheduled for next June.

The Czech Presidency of the European Union began on 1 January 2009, following a year which saw
 the continuation of efforts at the EU level to advance a common, concerted and balanced policy on
 migration, including the development of directives relating to labor migration, the *blue card*
 directive on highly qualified third country nationals, and a directive protecting the right of lawfully
 resident migrant workers from third countries.

The June 2008 EC Communication on a Common Immigration Policy, the October 2008 EC Communication on the Global Approach to Migration, and the European Pact on Immigration & Asylum which was endorsed by the European Council in October 2008, all attempt to set objectives and propose concrete initiatives in order to move forward with the development of a common EU migration policy.

The Czech Presidency has an important role in overseeing the first months of the implementation of the above-mentioned policy initiatives, as well as the final stage of the Hague Programme, and negotiations on the development of the third five year EU programme in the area of Justice Freedom and Security to commence in 2010 (post Hague Programme).

A key event of the Czech Presidency in the migration area will be the ministerial conference “Building Migration Partnerships” which is due to be held in Prague in April 2009. The purpose of the Conference is to enhance the political process and political dialogue on migration issues and to explore new avenues to jointly develop and implement migration management priorities and objectives based on the principle of genuine partnership between the origin, destination and transit countries of international migration flows.

The Conference shall endorse the principles and priorities of “Migration partnerships” and serve as the starting point for follow-up concrete policy development at senior expert level. From the point of view of its topics, the conference will focus on the fight against illegal migration, return and readmission, legal migration, integration and migration and development.

The organization of this event entails four preparatory meetings which have been launched in order to effectively plan for the Conference. The preparatory working group shall prepare a draft of principles, priorities and recommendations to be approved at the Ministerial Conference.

We believe the Conference could foster significant developments in the framework of the EU Global Approach on migration for the eastern and south eastern regions neighboring the EU.

We look with interest at the participation, contribution and outcomes of events such as the present workshop, which could also provide building blocks for a concerted approach on migration issues of concern to all, and particularly to countries in the Western Balkans whose labor migration agendas, often building on established National strategies, are in the making.

In concluding, I would like to express a word of thanks, on behalf of the Czech Presidency of the Council of the EU, to the organizers and the sponsors of this event, the representatives of the Commission, some of EU member states and also Switzerland;

and in particular to all participants to this workshop, the representatives of countries in the region who are partners in the project “Capacity Building, Information and Awareness Raising Towards Promoting Orderly Migration in the Western Balkans”. With your active participation in proceedings, and response to the various presentations and facilitations, you have reacted and provided constructive comments and recommendations in line with what is increasingly emerging as a central theme of migration management. I look forward to receiving and sharing with my government the final workshop proceedings, once they are reflected in a document.

I thank you on behalf of the Czech Presidency.