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**Economic migration, social cohesion
and development: towards an integrated approach**



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Good morning,

I know it is early in the morning, but I am glad to see the great attendance in this room. And this is important, because the title of this morning's session is "towards an integrated approach". This title comes with the promise that today's session will try to formulate some conclusions from yesterday's debate and that is exactly what I tried to do. I sat down and I listened to your contributions and the first question that came to my mind was: "what do we exactly mean by an integrated approach towards migration?" I think an integrated approach can have more than one dimension.

An integrated approach can mean a coordinated approach of issues of common interest both international and domestic. I think a good example of this dimension is whether we as European countries consider for instance that there is an armed conflict in Iraq? How do we assess the safety situation, and what kind of policies do we have when it comes to the protection of refugees coming from that region? So is that what we mean by 'an integrated approach'? I would say this is just one dimension.

Another dimension is the cooperation and the coordination between the countries of origin, transit and destination. For example, countries of destination cooperate with countries of origin to make sure that the reasons why people migrate are addressed in a proper way. That can entail development cooperation but also for instance coordinated in-depth investigations of criminal behaviour like trafficking of human beings.

At the Council of Europe meeting of Ministers of Justice in Lanzarote last year, I gave an example of how this cooperation is implemented in the Netherlands. At the time I was putting together a Rapid Reaction Team to send to Nigeria. Now, after one year I can give you the results of that action. A year ago we were having a lot of under age girls, who after having been trafficked to the Netherlands ended up in prostitution. To combat this, we started a criminal investigation in cooperation with the Nigerian authorities and we actually exposed some international criminal networks. After we rounded up the criminal networks the Rapid Reaction Teams went to Nigeria and carried out pre-boarding checks at the airports. They actually managed to bring back the number of under age girls being trafficked to the Netherlands to almost none. This does not mean that these Rapid Reaction Teams are the solution but they can be part of the solution when we are trying to address the complicated issues and challenges we are facing.

The cooperation between all countries involved in issue of migration is therefore another dimension of the 'integrated approach'. That is why the Council of Europe is such a very

interesting forum; most of the countries present at this table are either a country of destination or a country of transit or a country of origin.

Another dimension of the ‘integrated approach towards migration’ is the integration and coordination of domestic policies. Is it possible to have a migration policy that is not integrated with labour market policy? Is it possible to have a migration policy that is not integrated with development cooperation policy? I think the answer that we gave yesterday in this room is no. There was also consensus yesterday regarding the necessity of coordination of migration policy with integration policy, especially to maintain social cohesion.

As I said, I listened carefully to the debates yesterday and I noticed the words that you all used mostly at this table. They were ‘legal migration’ and ‘labour migration’. Now, within the atmosphere of this meeting that may sound very logical. However, it is rather special that we reach consensus on such an issue. Not even 5 years ago, in the Netherlands, talking about legal migration and labour migration as a desirable phenomenon was a taboo. At that time, and even more in the late 90’s, the Netherlands was facing two problems that were blocking every creative thought on new forms of legal migration. The first problem was the number of asylum seekers coming to our country. Being a small country, at the end of the 90’s the Netherlands faced an influx of more than 50.000 asylum seekers per year. It was clear that the government was not able to manage migration flows, which was damaging the public support for the protection of the most vulnerable migrants. This problem needed to be addressed and the government needed to show that it could be in control of migration flows.

The second problem that we were facing at the time, which was becoming more and more apparent, was the issue of the integration of ethnic minorities. The Netherlands used to have rather liberal policies towards integration, along with the perception that by making sure that people integrated social economically all problems would be solved. However, in the 90’s we realised that the social cultural aspect of migration was at least as important as the social economic one and that having a job was probably not the only thing that was needed for integration in the society. This debate of course came with all kinds of questions about cultural identity and about religious freedoms. As a matter of fact, this debate is in a way still ongoing, both in the Netherlands as well as in other countries. Such a debate was and still is necessary, at least in the Dutch context, in order to create room for a debate on new forms of legal migration. In the Netherlands we did two things to solve these problems. Firstly, we adopted a new Aliens Act which helps us manage the asylum flows better. Secondly, we launched a debate on integration and on what is actually expected from people who migrate to the Netherlands and what we have to offer them in terms of civil rights. The result of this

debate was that the conditions were created for new policies on legal migration. We now for example have a program for highly skilled workers on the basis of which we are able to give residence permits within two weeks time to persons we think can contribute to either economic, scientific or cultural development in the Netherlands. This program has already proven to be very popular among migrants coming to the Netherlands. Another very recent new policy is that we have opened up the Netherlands for students from all over the world who can come to the Netherlands not strictly on the basis of demand. They don't have to find a job first, before immigrating, but they can come to the Netherlands and spend one year looking for a job. If they find a job within that year, they can stay in the Netherlands. I think these are examples of policies which many countries have already adopted or have started considering. I think this is exactly what European countries need to do: to include legal migration in our strategy on migration as a whole.

I think that we should continue to discuss these issues, maybe even more actively than we do now. We should think about our vision on migration and about what role legal migration plays in that vision. This is necessary because it clearly is partly in our own economic interest, but a vision is also needed to deal with questions that arise on for example the phenomenon of brain drain in countries of origin.

Consensus is needed on what the exact position of Europe is on the issue of legal migration in order to have a fair debate with the countries of origin. There are some countries at this table that have the experience of conducting readmission talks with countries of origin which have not always been concluded in a very positive way. If we want readmission to take place and if we want return to countries of origin to be sustainable than we need to have a fair debate with all countries involved. Creating new forms of legal migration I think will enable us to have that more fair debate. When I speak about legal migration I mean all forms of it, but especially labour migration. One such new form of legal migration was mentioned several times during yesterday's debate: circular migration. In addition to welcoming highly skilled migrants, circular migration is a promising new policy because our countries, the migrants and the countries of origin can benefit from it.

In our Council of ministers in the Netherlands, just before the summer, we agreed upon two pilots on circular migration. This is a very important step towards that fair debate I mentioned. The decision concerns two small pilots of 100 migrants each, from two different countries and for a certain period of time. We were, and still are, facing a lot of questions in connection with this new phenomenon. What do we do for example with social security? These people should not compete with our own unemployed, especially not in larger Europe,

where countries as the Netherlands already have many workers coming from countries like Bulgaria and Romania. So how do we make sure that circular migration does not bring new competition on our labour market between the migrants, our own unemployed and workers from the new member states of the European Union? Another important question to answer is whether circular migration can truly be temporary. I don't think that many other countries sitting at this table are willing to accept circular migration as something that ends up being permanent anyway. So what is temporary, and how do we make sure that the conditions that we create in cooperating with the countries of origin are such that people actually do go back after their stay? How do we ensure that they return not only with the money that they earned but also with all the knowledge that we have provided them with which can contribute to the development of their countries of origin?

Therefore, the consensus about a vision on legal migration was something that I sincerely welcomed in yesterday's debate. The conclusion can even be that we have come a long way already. Still, in a way this was the easy part. It is much harder to bring our daily actions as political leaders, as the leadership of our countries, in line with that long term vision that we basically agree upon. I think we should just sit for a second and think of all the opportunities that we can make use of. We take decisions on a daily basis. We start cooperations with countries like the Ukraine. We all invest in border control, in training people working in the field of migration, in identifying falsified documents etcetera, and we try to cooperate with other countries in these fields, but we should really look at the things we do on a daily basis, the decisions that we take as politicians, in order to determine whether they are in line with that long term vision that we have on the migration issue. That is something that I would really like to bring to your attention. I think this is also exactly what Mrs. Jonker was referring to when she talked about the most experienced countries having the responsibility to take part in meetings like this not only to just exchange experiences but also to start cooperations over and over again in order to give assistance to those countries that don't have the same experience as yet.

There are so many examples that I can give but maybe I should just conclude by saying that there are various settings in which we talk about our vision on migration, about an integrated approach towards migration. We all know how important it is and as a matter of fact this coming Monday the European Union ministers are going to meet in Paris to again discuss European asylum and migration policies. Those are moments in which we can actually take decisions that contribute to the vision that was so seriously and so fiercely pronounced yesterday by many of the speakers in this room. So that is what I will surely try to do this

coming Monday, and I would like to invite all those present in this meeting who are going to be in that other meeting on Monday too, to do exactly the same, so that what we did and do here is not isolated from our actions either on our domestic political platforms or on the European platform.

Well, I do believe, and that is the overall conclusion, that yesterday's debate did take us a step further. I am quite convinced of the fact that it took us a big step further towards that European vision on integrated migration policies and that is very good. But in a room with so many inspiration and so many people that actually have the steering wheel in their hands this cannot only be an abstract vision. We all have to combine it with the day-to-day actions. And I do not only invite the European Union countries, but all the countries present here, including the observing states whose cooperation is so important to us, to do so.

My final words are simply words of gratitude to the organisation, to Ukraine, for bringing us to this region once again and making visible what the need for this cooperation actually means. It is an inspiring environment where I actually find the inspiration to go back home and do exactly what I just said and I hope we all do so. Thank you very much.