

**High Level Parliamentary Conference on Policy
Coherence for Development and Migration**

**Speech of European Commissioner Wallström
12 February 2009 – European Parliament -
Brussels**

Chair Person,

Ladies and Gentlemen Parliamentarians

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Co-operation and coordination seem natural elements when working as a team and this is especially true in the drafting of public policies. Making sure that one policy does not negatively influence the implementation of others requires, however, the extra mile. It is a delicate process in balancing diverging interests to maximize the final result.

The extra mile, for the European Union, is the concept of Policy Coherence for Development (PCD). It is to ensure that 12 selected European policies that could have an impact on development countries, in particular, **Trade, Environment, Agriculture, Fisheries and Research** and, of course **Migration**, do complement each other in favour of the poorest countries. It aims to build

synergies between policies other than development and development objectives.

Migration policy which brings us together today is obviously of great importance as it deals with our relations with developing countries. In times of crises, like the economic and financial crisis we are faced with today, we tend to look inward, whilst it is at such moments that we need to retain an open, broad and global perspective. Migration, being a global phenomenon, will continue, and we need to seize the opportunities it offers us in regard to its multiple economic, social and cultural benefits.

Migration is a policy area that provides positive examples of contribution to the reduction of poverty in developing countries. When migration flows are properly managed, both countries of origin and countries of destination can benefit from them. Outward migration could mean the reduction in human resources in countries where the need for it is high -especially in case of highly skilled migrants- but it could also mean reduced local labour market pressures.

Remittances from migrants to their country of origins are another positive contribution. These financial flows reach several hundreds billions of

euros every year. While mainly focusing at consumption, thus contributing significantly to cushioning the effect of external shocks and crisis on population, a good portion of these amounts can be allocated to investment.

The EU is attempting to reduce the costs of these transfers, to make them faster, cheaper and safer notably via the creation of the African Institute on Remittances. This institute, which will be under the leadership of the African Union and launched in co-operation with the World Bank, will be a centre of excellence for remittances to Africa.

In that context, I would like to stress the need to be gender sensitive on the issue of migration. These financial flows usually benefits wives and families which stayed behind in the countries of origin. The impact of these funds on their well being is direct. But more and more, women as well are migrating and, when they do, it would seem that their level of remittances is higher and they tend to send it over longer periods. These are specificities which we ought to take into account in our policies.

Beyond the importance of these financial transfers, which are and will remain of private nature, let me insist on Diasporas' in western countries to contribute to the development of their countries.

This can be through networking, sharing of information or via investments in development projects.

Diaspora organisations are true development actors and the €15M joint Commission- UNDP initiative recently launched will favour their further involvement in assisting their countries of origins. It will also allow them to network more efficiently. One of our priorities is indeed to establish a structured dialogue with the Diaspora organisations.

Countries of destination for their part welcome the arrival of labour, skilled or not, allowing entire economic sectors and branches to develop. This is an aspect which we need to highlight for our public opinions in this time of crises. Indeed, economic sectors, such as public health, construction, services to people, bear witness of the positive effects migrations have in our countries.

Taking into account those multiple effects in the definition of public policies on migration requires the revision of policy making processes which very often are restricted to ministries of justice and home affairs. Today, foreign affairs, development,

employment and or social affairs ministries must have their say in the formulation of these policies.

And what we are doing today, with this very first joint Commission, Parliament and OECD Conference, on a specific theme we are all three interested in, is a symbol of future policy making processes, with more interactions between organisation and institutions ultimately sharing similar objectives.

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Policy Coherence is particularly advanced within the European Union Global Approach to migration, adopted in 2005.

Since its adoption in 2005, it has aimed at genuine partnership with third countries and the incorporation of all migration and asylum issues in a comprehensive and balanced manner.

I recall also that Africa and the EU entered into a Joint Strategic Partnership in Lisbon in 2007 that enables us, based on intensified dialogue, to meet common challenges. The partnership has the potential to enhance and promote policy coherence. It permits us to tackle the interactions between migration and employment, trade, peace, security and human rights, topics traditionally

dealt with in isolation, and this within a unique framework of co-operation at the highest political level in Europe and Africa.

Brain drain is another complex and sensitive issue. The Commission has made a number of proposals, in particular to support the definition of policies favouring the retention of qualified personnel much needed for the very development of the country of origin. Such policies will be based on training, incentives, ethical recruitment in the EU and specific support to returning migrants.

This approach is particularly relevant for Africa, our neighbouring continent, with its enormous potential in human resources, despite the dire needs for training and for careful management of migration flows it requires. We must therefore offer more opportunities for legal migration while keeping brain drain issues under control.

The creation of Information and Management Centres in partner countries in Africa –recently in Mali – are some of the responses we are proposing and which we could debate later on with our Malian counterpart present in this room today.

This is only the beginning. And this type of initiatives will only be a success if we are able to increase legal migration and mobility opportunities. It is crucial that this aspect of the Global Approach to Migration be implemented with similar thrust as for its other aspects such as Development and Migration or illegal migrations. Mobility partnerships and circular migration are excellent subjects on which the Union and its Member States should be in the position to make concrete proposals.

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Policy Coherence for Development is crucial especially in times of turmoil. There is a need to act in a co-ordinated and structured manner to address the global challenges.

We need to walk that extra mile for coherence together. I am aware that it is not an easy task but the effort is indispensable and fully in keeping with our commitments towards the Millennium Development Goals