

Third informal thematic session on International co-operation and governance of migration in all its dimensions, including borders, transit, entry, return, readmission, integration and reintegration

19-20 June 2017, Geneva

Statements of Latvia

Panel 1: International cooperation and governance of migration in all its dimensions

Panel 2: International cooperation and governance of migration in transit, on entry and at borders

19 June

Thank you, Mr.Chair! I will have one joint statement that covers both of today's panels. Latvia aligns itself with the statements of the EU and its MS both of this morning and the one to follow later this afternoon.

As it has been pointed out in the Sutherland report, when people trespass international borders, migration is no longer a domestic issue but also an international one.

Therefore Latvia fully shares the principles of solidarity and shared responsibility, and takes its international commitments seriously. In the framework of the EU programmes, Latvia has already relocated 62% of the asylum seekers primarily from Greece and from Italy, and resettled 20% of the Syrians from Turkey it committed to.

Latvia actively participates in and contributes to joint operations in Europe such as FRONTEX, European Asylum Support Office, and others. This year Latvia involves about 220 experts and ensures almost a hundred days of technical equipment delivery for the planned activities of FRONTEX as well as stands ready to involve further 30 experts for the quick response reserve.

States have the rights and responsibilities to manage and control their borders as an important element of security of all of its inhabitants including the persons already granted international protection. Latvia witnesses direct influx of illegal migrants over its Eastern border, primarily from our neighbouring states to the east but also from several countries in the Central and Eastern Asia. We review each case separately in full respect with our international obligations including under the international human rights and refugee law, in particular the principle of *non-refoulement*. However, in this context we fully share the approach that the migration compact should expressly state that illegal border crossings are unacceptable form of migration. The compact should especially focus on the ways to prevent and

combat the deplorable crimes of human trafficking and smuggling particularly devastating to vulnerable migrants.

Return is another area that requires international cooperation. Whenever possible Latvia prefers voluntary return, including assisted voluntary return carried out in cooperation with the IOM. However, we have had to exert forced return in 39 cases this year. In all of those cases it has been critical that the countries of origin have observed their obligation under international law to accept the return and readmission of their nationals.

Latvia supports a whole of government approach and a broader multistakeholder cooperation in dealing with the newcomers. The government offers all the basic services to the asylum seekers including basic health care and primary and secondary education. Emergency health care is also available to irregular migrants. In addition to the integration services provided by the government, Latvia welcomes the voluntary integration support offered by our civil society and the private sector.

Panel 3: International cooperation and governance of migration on return, readmission, integration and reintegration

Thank you, Mr.moderator! Thanks to the panellists for the valuable introduction! The example of the German – Philippines Bilateral Labour agreement for health workers [described by one of the panellists] is a good example that could serve as a model.

Latvia aligns itself with the statement of the EU and its MS and would like to share a few practices applied nationally.

As already outlined by IOM and several other speakers, Latvia also supports a whole of government approach and a broader multistakeholder cooperation in dealing with the newcomers. The government offers all the basic services to the asylum seekers including basic health care and primary and secondary education. Individual curricula is elaborated and offered to each school aged child entering the education system. Emergency health care is also available to illegal migrants. Whereas persons granted international protection benefit from the same health and education services as citizens.

Latvia regards acceptance and integration as beneficial to both the newcomers and the host communities. Information centres for migrants offer free of charge consultations on employment, education, social and legal issues in the capital and in the four biggest regions of Latvia. These centres coordinate interpretation services and psychological support upon request. Latvia ensures immediate Latvian language

training and individual integration planning and mentoring for each asylum seeker. If the person is granted international protection in Latvia, these integration services are continued for the period of additional year, while all the legally employable persons with a protection status are registered in the State Employment Agency where they are expected to undergo profiling and training, as well as to meet the potential employers.

In addition to the integration services provided by the government, Latvia welcomes the voluntary support offered by our civil society and the private sector. For example, an entrepreneur who owns a board game store started a Facebook group “I want to help refugees” that has grown into a civil society movement organising socialising events open to all the newcomers irrespective of their status with sport and board games, joint seasonal celebrations and others, as well as manages the delivery and provision of any practical support required.

In the cases of rejected asylum, return decisions are taken. Whenever possible Latvia prefers assisted voluntary return. It is being carried out in close and efficient cooperation with the International Organisation for Migration, mostly accompanied with appropriate reintegration assistance.

Thank you!