

FOLLOW-UP MEETING OF THE EURO-AFRICAN CONFERENCE ON MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT.

Speech by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Spain

Good morning, Ibrahim Chambas, President of the ECWAS Commission, Zarifou Ayeva, Minister of Foreign Affairs and African Integration of Togo, Bala Garba Jahumpa, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Gambia, Alain Lubamba, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, authorities, senior officials, ambassadors, ladies and gentlemen...

It is a source of great satisfaction to me to welcome you here in Madrid as Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation in the Spanish government — a government which, along with the Kingdom of Morocco, has been one of the sponsors of the Euro-African Conference on Migration and Development at Rabat.

This work session in Madrid is a token of the concern and sensitivity of European and African governments regarding the need to harmonise demographic management and bring order to migratory flows between the two continents.

The phenomenon of migration is as old as Humanity itself and has driven massive demographic shifts and transformations throughout the world and its history. There are currently more than 200 million people who for various reasons travel to live in another country where they can satisfy their aspirations for a future life and personal autonomy.

The causes that drive millions of people to emigrate are many and varied, but poverty, humanitarian and climatic disasters, violence or lack of freedoms are the most common circumstances prompting them to undertake the journey. And now, in addition to the traditional causes, we are seeing new ones created by globalisation and the progressive spread of the new information and communication technologies.

Migratory chaos and illegal immigration have fomented the emergence of illegal networks which traffic in persons and engage in other criminal activities. Their growing activities interfere with the normal pattern of migratory movements, violate human rights and tend to undermine the basic principles of young democracies. At the same time, these criminal networks condemn thousands of citizens to frustration, and all too often death, in hazardous voyages to uncertain destinations.

Given this scenario, it is essential that our governments act boldly and resolutely, aware of the importance of the challenge facing them. The Spanish government and the Spanish Prime Minister, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, have shown their firm resolve in designing and setting in motion an integrated migratory policy based on the creation of a Euro-African partnership, as a model

of effective dialogue and cooperation among countries of origin, transit and destination.

The Euro-African Conference at Rabat in 2006 signalled the start of an ambitious process of concertation, oriented towards political and economic cooperation, co-development and the introduction of effective public policies on migration, following the principle of ownership. And also towards combating illegal immigration.

The approval of a Plan of Action has enabled us to define concrete objectives and measures, and to put the process into operation. Rabat, then, marks the commencement of Euro-African regional cooperation on migration and sustainable development.

The European Union, seized of the importance of this partnership, brought the African partners together at the first European Union-African Conference on Migration and Development at Tripoli, where the regional political dialogue initiated at Rabat was brought to a conclusion. The involvement of the European Union has been and remains decisive. The conclusions of the European Council of December 2006 took on board the global approach to migration and development analysed at Rabat and Tripoli. In this way we have acknowledged the need to introduce mechanisms of dialogue and concertation for the management of migratory flows with our African partners, so as to assure the effectiveness and coherence of national policies.

The Spanish government attaches extraordinary importance to the development of this approach because it addresses all the various dimensions of migration. We also believe that it is a more appropriate means of satisfying Euro-African aspirations.

This follow-up meeting in Madrid is a milestone in cooperation on migration. It will enable us to take stock of the actions undertaken within the framework of the Plan of Action and carry our dialogue further; it will also give us the chance to enrich the debate on migration and give the process a decisive push forward.

Rabat is benchmark for the framing of bold migratory policies aimed at maintaining a balance between fostering legal migration and combating all forms of illegal migration — policies for which the dual notions of “migration and development” provide the fundamental underpinning for action and appropriation (or “ownership”). In this way, the medium to long term young Africans will cease to see migration as an obligation and will come to see it as a simple option.

Migratory policy is a means to stimulate legal, orderly flows. Hiring by Spanish companies in Senegal; the creation of centres for migratory flow management like the one at Bamako; the setting up of institutional enhancement projects; the organisation of seminars and awareness-raising campaigns in other countries of sub-Saharan Africa; the setting up of joint committees on migratory flows with our partners in the Maghrib to improve bilateral communication; the signing of a new generation of agreements aimed at consolidating the “Spirit of Rabat”; the

creation of effective readmission mechanisms, and the encouragement of circular migration — these are just some tokens of the Spanish government's determination to build a Euro-African partnership capable of meeting the challenges of the 21st century.

This policy also brings all the means at its disposal to bear in combating illegal immigration and trafficking in persons, which together constitute one of the most vile human dramas of our time.

Joint surveillance of territorial waters; cooperation with our partners in identifying and repatriating immigrants to their countries of origin; the struggle against the mafias and organised crime networks; training and equipping of border and police forces; or the study of means to improve the performance of maritime rescue and salvage tasks — these are some of the actions characteristic of our cooperation in the fight against all forms of irregular migration.

The “Spirit of Rabat” means more than mere management of migratory flows — it announces a process of political and institutional dialogue that promotes a new conception of migratory policy. This is already acknowledged by the United Nations in the High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development and implemented by the European Union through its Global Approach.

The acceptance of this migratory acquis by the international community speaks for itself. I am delighted that our European and African partners should actively contribute to the process. It is my hope and wish that when the Ministerial Conference meets at Paris in 2008, the principles of the Rabat Declaration will be reaffirmed and we shall be able to congratulate ourselves on the results.

Given the interdependence of societies and States, we must needs work to bring order to migration. This requires commitment and efficacy if we are to open up new fields of cooperation. Our goal is to strengthen political, social, cultural and economic dialogue in a globalised world beset by severe fractures that are born of inequalities. In the words of the Moroccan poet Abderrahman el Fath, “we are different, but we are complementary and necessary”.

Thank you very much.