

Statement by Minister of State Gloser at the Ministerial Euro-African Conference on Migration and Development in Rabat on 10-11 July 2006

I would like to start off by thanking our Moroccan hosts and the co-organizers Spain and France most heartily for spearheading this conference and organizing it so well. I would also like to thank Senegal for the active part it played in the run-up to this conference.

In the past year there have been few socio-political topics that have received such massive attention in Europe as migration. Germany itself is gravely affected by migration; immigrants now account for over 12 per cent of the population. This diversity enriches our society, but also presents a challenge.

The incidents in Ceuta and Melilla and the migration flows towards the Canary Islands clearly show how many people are prepared to risk their lives to get to Europe in some way or another. One does not need a crystal ball to predict that these are the highly visible signs of a phenomenon that will be with us for some time. We therefore have to exert an active influence on migration, so that we are not at its mercy.

Germany is therefore very pleased that the Heads of State and Government of the EU member states adopted a "Global Approach to Migration" in December 2005. This Global Approach covers policies to combat illegal immigration and, in cooperation with third countries, harnessing the benefits of legal migration. This Approach, which calls on Europe to seek solutions to migration issues in coordination with countries of origin and transit, is sound and without any real alternative. Germany supports it, because it not only includes short and medium-term measures, but also envisages a long-term strategy and a partnership between all countries. Its comprehensive Priority Actions Focusing on Africa and the Mediterranean for 2006, which combine border management and readmission measures with development cooperation to tackle root causes, are a good first concrete step, and will surely be followed by others.

As also reflected in the Global Approach, one of the principal factors in migration is development. Only by supporting sustainable development in the countries of origin can we succeed in slowly changing the conditions in those countries with the result that potential migrants no longer feel the need to emigrate in order to have a chance in life.

The following two elements belong in any strategy if we want to succeed:

1. Our goal is to reduce migratory pressure in countries of origin by combating poverty, preventing crises and liberalizing trade, for improvements in these areas can generate crucial impetus for increased growth, employment and income. We want our long-term development commitments to give people the prospect of a secure future in their own countries – and thus a reason to stay put!
2. Migrants are a potential asset for development in their countries of origin – this resource must be better harnessed. Migrants transfer a considerable amount of money to their home countries. Remittance services should therefore be made easier. Cooperation with members of diasporas should be fostered.

Without a coherent foreign, migration and development policy vis-à-vis third states, without partnership arrangements between states and concerted action at global level, we cannot successfully tackle the challenges in the field of migration.

That is why today's conference is so important. It is a political signal of a partnership of Europe and Africa. It is an ideal opportunity for us all to weigh up the issues of migration and development, in dialogue, and to agree on concrete improvements. The conference will enable us to see where there is convergence, as there is for example on development cooperation, where the Europeans and Africans want to implement similar approaches.

At the same time it would be illusory to hope that we will always be of one mind on all issues, given the complexity of migration and its diverse knock-on effects. The Plan of Action is a compromise that reflects the various views on the migration issue. In this way the conference delegates can move forward in the fields where they believe action is particularly urgent.

Commitment is the key concept here. It will be crucial for both sides to actively endeavour to get migration under better control. Responsible, reliable and genuine cooperation between countries of origin, transit and destination will be decisive, in particular when it comes to combating and preventing illegal migration with all due consequence. In practice, this also means that readmission measures have to be implemented effectively. Reliable cooperation is also the indispensable basis for all initiatives to facilitate the use of existing means of legal migration. All delegates are called upon to tell their public at home why such cooperation is

also of benefit to them in the long term. It is thus good that regular progress reviews on the implementation of the Plan of Action are envisaged.

The conference could also be trend-setting in another regard. The idea of approaching the issue of migration in a regional context, focusing on concrete migration routes, is innovative and promising. It means that the conference participants will discuss concrete proposals to solve problems that they know well, because they themselves are affected by them.

This approach also has the positive effect that it discourages abstract discussions, which are otherwise lapsed into all too easily. The Plan of Action and the political statement prove this. Germany hopes that this approach will turn out to have a pilot character, and may later be applied to other migration routes in other parts of Africa and other neighbouring regions of Europe.

I wish us all a successful conference, and hope that it produces many concrete results!