



WELCOME REMARKS

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*The Inter-ethnic City:
Management and Policies for a Better Integration of Migrants*

Monday, 28 September 2009 (9:00am – 1:00pm)
Conference Room 8, United Nations Headquarters, New York

Excellency Enzo Scotti, Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs;
Excellencies; Distinguished Delegates;
Invited Guests; Ladies and Gentlemen;

It is a pleasure to participate in this important discussion on the integration of migrants, and I thank our co-sponsors, the Permanent Missions of Italy and Canada, along with the Alliance of Civilizations for making this event possible.

This session is part of an ongoing initiative of the AoC and IOM to contribute to promoting the richness of inter-cultural diversity in our societies, and in this particular session, our cities and urban centers.

Our discussion today builds on a previous exchange in Istanbul at the AoC Forum in April, entitled “Integrating Migrants – A Challenge for Inclusive Societies”. Whereas, that discussion served as an exploratory session, today’s roundtable is intended to sharpen our focus on the integration of migrants in an urban context, recognizing the unique challenges brought forward by rapid urbanization and technological advancements.

We will look specifically at good practices as they relate to integration, diversity management and social inclusion.

In doing so, we will here different perspectives, and explore how public and private service providers can contribute to promoting co-existence between immigrant communities and their host societies.

Our subject today is not without controversy. The term “integration” means different things to different people. For some, integration is akin to cultural assimilation. Others talk about cultural “melting pots” or “cultural mosaics.” In some circles still, integration is treated as an internal security matter.

I think you would agree that in our ever connected and inter-dependent world, we cannot afford exclusivity, isolationism or segregation. It is in fact cultural diversity enhances creativity in our communities, strengthens social cohesion and contributes to cross-cultural relations and international peace and security.



Integration is a dynamic two-way process of mutual adjustment and accommodation by the migrants and the host community. It is shaped to a large extent by the integration policies and practices of the host government.

Villages, towns, cities, and within them, the spaces where migrants meet the host community, e.g. workplaces, schools, community centers, shops, and the local government offices, are the social crucibles where the alchemy of integration will succeed or fail. These are the points of contact and convergence of all policies whether national, regional or international.

The report of the High Level Group of the Alliance of Civilizations aptly recognized this point and stressed the role of leadership in countries of immigration in promoting diversity as a great source of strength.

IOM takes pride in working in this particular field for many years --- from migrant training activities, including pre-departure orientation, cultural orientation, and language training in 44 countries that assist up to 50,000 migrants annually --- to preparing refugees for the challenges of resettlement in new societies, and engaging civil society and immigrant communities in diversity training at local and regional levels.

My colleagues and I are also grateful for the excellent partnership we enjoy with the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations. Together, we have an ambitious action plan:

- To display positive and successful integration experiences;
- To share good integration practices globally; and
- To provide technical support for the development of national migration and integration strategies.

This plan has particular relevance in this period of global economic and financial crisis. There is a tendency at present for some Governments to think about migration in counter-cyclical terms. That is to say, the tendency is to harden attitudes towards migrants and send them home whereas legal migrants are needed if our economies are to recover. As difficult as it undoubtedly is to alter attitudes, regulations and legislation, it would be prudent for Governments to continue giving close consideration to integration policies and approaches.

IOM has been particularly active over the past year assisting Governments to minimize discrimination and xenophobia. Recently, for example, IOM launched a campaign through the Italian media about the contribution of migrants to society. In South Africa and in Ukraine for example, we have initiatives that directly tackle issues of xenophobia because of the levels of violence towards migrants. This is a very important part of what we do, to educate and work with communities to promote greater understanding of migrants.

Like many of the other challenges we face as an international community, migrant integration is one that requires the broadest coalition of partners. We are pleased to have assembled here distinguished representatives from local governments, foundations, the UN system, academia and civil society.



If we are able today to listen and capture your experiences and lessons learned on migrant integration – I believe this session will meet its objective and help us prepare for the next AoC Forum in Rio in May 2010.

In conclusion, Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you for participation today in what promises to be an interesting discussion on a topic that needs to be critically discussed and continuously adapted over time to give voice to all who stand to benefit.

Thank you.

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