

Speech
by Federal Minister
Dr. Wolfgang Schäuble
at the Euromed Ministerial meeting
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Migration is an issue of growing importance, in particular for cooperation within the Euro-Mediterranean partnership. Global migration presents us all – whether as migration countries of origin, transit or destination – with a host of challenges. We can only meet these challenges effectively if we tackle them jointly and act jointly. That requires mutual trust and an honest partnership. This is why it is a good thing that we are meeting today – as agreed in Barcelona in 2005 – to talk about migration trends and the issues that they raise and in order to make some progress on the path to achieving joint solutions.

We have already made an important step forward with the European Union's overall approach to migration, which was adopted and launched just two years ago, focusing on Africa and the Mediterranean region, and with the relevant action plan.

Today, it must be our aim to deal with the three main aspects of migration in the framework of the Euromed process: the fight against illegal migration, cooperation in the area of legal migration and the link between migration and development. If we – as Euro-Mediterranean partners – clearly indicate that we support joint political responsibility for all of these aspects and cooperate effectively, honestly and in an atmosphere of trust, we can take advantage of the opportunities that migration offers and minimise the risks that are associated with it. National action is no longer sufficient in our increasingly globalised world without borders. If we recognise that we have a common interest and jointly commit ourselves to safeguarding that interest, we will be successful.

That applies particularly in the fight against illegal migration. We need to jointly restrain illegal migration, which does not help people but places them in difficult, often hopeless situations – quite often involving danger to life and limb – and makes them

dependent. We are responsible for putting a stop to the activities of organised smuggling gangs and human traffickers who make unscrupulous promises to people and just shrug their shoulders if they die. We need to pull the rug from under their feet. This shared responsibility must not make us complacent. It compels us to act quickly, decisively and effectively.

This includes having an efficient system of repatriation and readmission – including recognising the obligation under international law to identify and readmit one's own citizens as well as being prepared to conclude and implement readmission agreements. It is important that all the Euro-Mediterranean partners support the European Union's ongoing efforts in this regard in order to strengthen cooperation based on mutual trust and that all partners jointly combat illegal migration. The seminar on issues relating to voluntary returns and readmission, which Germany is offering to host, is intended to be a tangible contribution to achieving that objective.

It is only on the basis of a trustful cooperation in the area of repatriation policy that we can further develop new approaches in regular migration. Both aspects are two sides of the same coin.

It is a matter of developing and strengthening the positive effects of regular migration. In this regard, legal migration options are an important prerequisite for managing migration. Yet legal migration options are dependent on the labour markets in the individual partner states. This is why competence for the scope of legal labour migration is with and indeed should remain with the individual countries.

We have to cooperate more closely in order to turn often uncontrolled migration into well-managed migration that benefits all partners. In this regard, cooperation should be stepped up along actual migration routes – as initiated by the Conference in Rabat last year. Ideally, the triple-win situation for the countries of origin and destination and for the migrants themselves which the former UN General Secretary Kofi Annan referred to can come to pass.

We need to focus more on the interests of the countries of origin and to represent these interests more effectively. Instead of a brain drain, which hinders development

in migrants' countries of origin through the loss of valuable knowledge carriers and highly-qualified people, we need a brain gain, bringing know-how and new ideas back into these countries.

One option worth considering would be the establishment of a training partnership, in which people from the Euro-Mediterranean partner countries come to the European Union for a limited period of time for the purposes of training and advanced training with a view to subsequently using the knowledge they have acquired there in their countries of origin. This could be a variant of the model of circular or temporary migration and of mobility partnerships proposed by my French counterpart at the time, the now President Sarkozy, and myself a year ago.

If we want to accomplish our common goal, which is to achieve migration that is beneficial to all, to foster development in the countries of origin and to combat illegal migration, we will need political dialogue and cooperation – both at multilateral and bilateral level. Germany and Morocco have set up a mixed working group in order to exchange views on a range of issues, including migration.

We need to define joint goals and priorities. I am pleased that today we will initiate concrete, operational measures in order to bring the Euro-Mediterranean process to life in the area of migration and to generate visible added value. Yet we must take the different wishes and needs of all partners into account and endeavour to reach a compromise that is acceptable to all parties. I am confident that today's meeting will help to achieve this.