

**Address of Mr Gundars Daudze,
Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of the
Republic of Latvia
at the General Debate on
*Strengthening the global regime for migrants and
refugees: the need for evidence-based policy solutions***

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Mr. President,
Secretary General,
Dear Colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen!

It is my pleasure to take part in the General Debate on a topic that demands attention from Parliaments and Governments around the world, as well as from the international society in general.

Considering the situation in migration flows over the recent years, we see the importance of migration and international security issues – and the need to work on sustainable solutions at all levels – national, regional, and global.

It is necessary to have a common understanding, approach and commitment to work towards an efficient and sustainable migration management. Therefore, Latvia welcomes the Global Compact initiatives¹, aimed at tackling these issues within the framework of the United Nations.

In Latvia's view, these Compacts should become the first step towards a comprehensive, balanced and global approach to migration management in order to overcome the existing challenges. At the same time, it is important that measures at the international level are initiated only when actions at the national level within the Member States of the United Nations are not efficient.

Latvia has always supported appeals to strengthen comprehensive and strategic cooperation with the main migration origin and transit countries, with a special focus on readmission activities.

In strengthening the global regime for migrants and refugees, I would like to underline the importance of regional cooperation, since it has a great potential to develop efficient solutions.

¹ Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and Global Compact for Refugees

The reason for that is the limits of a single country to tackle the challenges of regional migration flows. At the same time, global solutions may lack flexibility and needs-tailored approaches.

It is obvious that we need to look for sustainable solutions to manage migration efficiently. However, Latvia strongly believes that physical relocation of persons should be applied only as a final measure in emergency situations.

In Latvia's view, participation in any activities related to admission of third country nationals should be realized only on voluntary basis.

In order to achieve sustainability, it is important to ensure that participation in relocation activities corresponds to socio-economic situation, labour market needs, as well as national capacity.

Sustainability can only be achieved on the condition that individual countries can decide for themselves whether and to what extent to participate in the activities of relocation, admission and legal migration, taking into consideration the above-mentioned factors.

Speaking about Latvia: according to decisions taken at the EU level in 2015, Latvia has pledged to shelter more than 500 relocated persons. Until now, more than 70 % have already been relocated to Latvia from Greece, Italy and Turkey. Let me remind you that the total population of Latvia is just 1.93 million people.

Responding to EU initiatives related to relocation activities, Latvia established a high-level working group in 2015. This working group came forward with an “Action Plan for Movement and Admission in Latvia of Persons Who Need International Protection”. The objective of this plan is to create a system, fitting the circumstances of Latvia, for admitting asylum seekers, as well as for socio-economic inclusion of refugees and persons who have obtained alternative status.

Currently, according to the Action Plan, Latvia takes measures to ensure the selection, relocation, admission and accommodation of asylum seekers, as well as to arrange their socio-economic inclusion.

Over these three years, we have obtained concrete experience in dealing with migrant and refugees issues. This

fact is reflected in the amendments to the relevant legislation, approved by the Parliament of Latvia in 2017.

In conclusion, I would like to underline the importance of the principle of voluntary participation and sustainability. Latvia's experience shows that participation in relocation activities of migrants and refugees should correspond to the real socio-economic situation, labour market needs and national capacity of the destination country.

Thank you!