

Statement, Ambassador Eduard Gnesa, Special Ambassador for International cooperation in migration, Switzerland, on the occasion of the OHCHR meeting on “*Migration and human rights: towards the 2013 High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development*”

4 September 2013

Geneva, Palais des Nations

Excellencies,

Dear colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all I would like to **thank the High Commissioner** for the organization of this timely meeting on migration and human rights. It is a particular pleasure to be part of this most distinguished panel and share some thoughts on the topic of fundamental importance ahead of the second UN High Level Dialogue (HLD). This landmark event in New York will be important for the advancement of the global migration and development agenda and we are looking forward to substantive discussions.

Madame High Commissioner, we share your call that the rights of migrants should indeed be mainstreamed in all our interactions in New York: not only in round-table 2 but in all sessions of the high level dialogue. Mainstreaming has in the past however often led to the dispersion of an important topic with little tangible impact. **We have an obligation and an interest for this not to happen again.** While migration has had a positive effect on the human development of a lot of people, **many others have to face situations that remain increasingly alarming.**

The complexity of human mobility and the related protection challenges has increased. The feminization of migration and the migration of children has led to new situations of vulnerability and mixed migratory movements challenge traditional policy approaches. Human trafficking remains an unacceptable violation of the most fundamental human rights. Denying migrants their human rights also compromises their ability to contribute to the social and economic development of their countries of origin and destination. Hence and as pointed out by the Global Migration Group **“protecting human rights is not only a legal obligation, it is also a matter of public interest and intrinsically linked to human development”**.

In Switzerland well over 20% the population is foreign; more than one quarter of the workforce does not hold a Swiss passport. Protecting their rights, promoting their integration and creating an environment of non-discrimination and equal opportunities is therefore not only a moral issue but it is also in our economic, social and cultural interest. **Despite this, as many other countries in the world we do face challenges.** The roots thereof lie often in a negative perception of migration, fuelled by misinformation and misguided stereotypes, leading to fears. As a government **we have to take this seriously** and address these fears and involve our citizens in an open and transparent dialogue on migration. **We also have to be honest about the challenges and engage with other actors – be it international organisations, civil society and other governments – in a constructive, result-oriented debate which can lead us to tangible results.** Our hope for the High Level Dialogue is that we can have such an **open and frank debate.**

Madame High Commissioner,
Ladies and Gentlemen

The fact that we are all here today is in our view an important proof of the **trust and confidence built over the past few years, in particular through the Global Forum on Migration and Development**. The international community stepped out of the gridlock and is nowadays less political and more results-oriented. At the same time, migration patterns have changed **with more and more countries being sending, transit and receiving countries all at once**. As a result, **many countries now face similar challenges** when it comes to the protection of their citizen abroad or of migrants on their territory. Today all these factors allow us to have an **open dialogue on migration and human rights**, and will allow us to continue the discussions at the UNHLD in October **and beyond**.

Today we can recognize our shared responsibility to uphold human rights of migrants and join our efforts to identify the new challenges, the protection gaps arising from the new drivers of displacement and to cooperate for more coordinated action to better protect the rights of migrants.

In this spirit Norway and Switzerland have launched the **Nansen Initiative**. Its overall goal is to build consensus on **key principles and elements for the protection of persons displaced across borders in the context of natural disasters and climate change**. It does so through a state-led, bottom-up consultative process. It aims at setting the stage for future action at domestic, regional and international levels. The expected outcome is an international agenda for the protection of persons displaced across borders in the context of natural disasters.

To conclude, Madame High Commissioner, allow me to **raise three points linked to round-table three at the High Level Dialogue**, having the particular honor of co-chairing this session with Nigeria.

One key-element of round-table 3 is the notion of partnerships. **No country alone has the answers to all questions** posed by international migration. Especially when it comes to protecting the rights of migrants. **Only through partnerships among all stakeholders**, challenges can be identified and smart, pragmatic and action oriented solutions can be found. **Civil society**, for example, is often the closest to the reality of migrants; they **can advocate and inspire governments to find innovative and pragmatic solutions while being constructively critical**. The rights of migrants should also guide our bilateral relations with governments – as part of the Swiss migration partnerships with several countries various projects for the protection of migrants have been implemented.

In this session we will also talk about **mainstreaming of migration into development policies**. It should be our ambition to always ensure the human rights based approach in such initiatives. We will also strive **not only to include migration in the agenda on global sustainable development post 2015, but also to ensure a strong link to core principles such as human rights, age, gender, diversity sensitivity and other core principles**.

Finally we will talk about coherence and here again we have to address the importance of a **human rights based approach in all our migration and development policies**. I also take this opportunity to welcome the efforts made by the **Global Migration Group** with the creation of a specific working group on Migration, Human Rights and Gender. This is a very good example for increased coherence, strong cooperation and effective mainstreaming of the human rights of migrants in the work of the 16 agencies of the GMG.

Switzerland believes that the core human rights instruments already contain the necessary normative provisions for the protection of all human beings. However, reality shows that in practice migrants continue to face attacks, exploitation, discrimination and other types of abuse. **A pragmatic and coordinated approach among all actors concerned is therefore needed in order to reach the main objective: operationalise the rights for migrants, protecting them in a practical, effective and action-oriented way – I am confident that this meeting will contribute to this end.**

Thank you for your attention.