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How can European Migration Policies Promote Development?

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all I would like to thank the European Institute at LSE for the opportunity to speak on the important topic of how migration policies can promote development. The links between migration and development is a prioritized policy area of the Swedish Government. We believe that if migration is managed responsibly it has the potential to benefit receiving countries, countries of origin and migrants themselves. As the next chair of the Global Forum on Migration and Development, and with the upcoming UN High Level Dialogue on Migration and Development in 2013, Sweden is aiming at an increased international interest for this policy area.

Migration has been, and continues to be, a key driver of human progress and development. Many countries have come to the understanding that migration forms a key component of their development strategies. Migrants are crucial actors for development through the remittances they send home, for promoting trade and investment between countries of destination and countries of origin, and through the skills and ideas that they bring to the countries they come to, whether a country of destination or on return to their countries of origin.

If we look at remittances, migrants send back billions of dollars each year to their countries of origin. These remittances have reached a sum of approximately USD 350 billion a year, which is three times the volume of official development aid going to the same countries. The flows of private funds make an important contribution to development, not just for the recipient but also for society as a whole by stimulating consumption and increasing citizens' investment in social services such as education and health care. Further efforts are however needed to ensure that remittances can achieve their full development potential. Improving the general investment climate in countries of origin is one example of such an effort. When development cooperation supports the fight against corruption and the building of well-functioning institutions, the desire and willingness to engage and invest in the country of origin is likely to increase.

When formulating policy on international migration and development, our overall aim must be to enable people to migrate out of choice rather than necessity. This calls for a broad, balanced and long-term approach. A key aspect of such an approach is to promote coherent policy approaches that promote synergies between migration and other relevant policy areas, including development cooperation, trade, foreign affairs and integration. In this regard, it is important to recognize that the patterns of migration are changing, partly as a consequence of globalisation. The old

paradigm of migration for permanent settlement is increasingly giving way to more temporary and circular migration and mobility as a livelihood strategy for many migrants.

At the EU-level, the overall framework of the EU external migration policy, i.e. the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility, is designed to establish true and genuine cooperation and partnerships with third countries on all aspects of migration of strategic importance. The Global Approach has contributed to constructive dialogue and cooperation with EU partners, and the EU has reached a unique position in this global context through the development of the partnership idea as a "trademark". The Global Approach has also promoted the development of a cohesive policy for the Union's relations with third countries. In this context it is important to emphasize that the links between migration and development should remain central to all EU policies on migration, including the Global Approach.

Openness towards the outside world is one of Sweden's priorities. It is a starting point in Swedish immigration policy that migration is something positive and beneficial to our society. In this respect, I am proud of the labour migration reform which entered into force in Sweden in December 2008. It is one of the most significant reforms of Swedish migration policy in several decades and Sweden now has one of the most flexible and efficient systems for labour migration in the world, which makes it easier for Swedish companies to recruit labour from countries outside the European Union.

The main driving-force for the Swedish reform is the recognition that there are labour shortages in Sweden that will not be filled by people living in Sweden or in other EU countries. Employers often have difficulties in finding workers with the right skills. By filling these shortages in key economic sectors, migrants thereby contribute to the overall growth of the Swedish economy. There is also the demographic situation in Sweden. Our population is getting older and a smaller proportion of people of working age will therefore have to support an increasing percentage of the population in the future. In the long term this poses a serious challenge to the sustainability of our welfare systems. In order to successfully address these challenges, a forward-looking and broad political strategy is required. In this regard, labour immigration is part of Sweden's strategy for economic development, in the immediate- and long-term.

It is also important to remember that the challenges I just mentioned facing Sweden are as demanding, if not more, for the entire European Union. Facilitating growth of the European labour force by opening up for legal migration from third countries is essential in order to ensure that our labour markets remain diverse and vibrant. It is also crucial for achieving the targets set out in EU's growth strategy EU 2020.

The Swedish policy development continues to evolve, and we are currently looking at how the positive connections between migration and development can be further facilitated. To that end, Sweden is looking at ways to enable circular migration. There are many definitions of circular migration, but in Sweden the term is used to describe how migrants that have a residence permit in Sweden, can have the opportunity to return and contribute to development in their country of origin. Circular migration in the Swedish context is not a temporary migrant worker program, but a view that it should be possible for migrants to make a decision to leave Sweden either on a temporary or more permanent basis, and still have the possibility to come back again.

We believe that this kind of spontaneous movement allows migrants to be active in the development in their countries of origin. Spontaneous movement can take place when there is an enabling legislative framework that facilitates mobility. In order to improve possibilities of circular migration to Sweden, the Swedish Government, in July 2009, appointed an independent Parliamentary Committee to examine the link between circular migration and development. The Committee's task was to map out circular migration and identify factors that influence migrants' opportunities to circulate, i.e. to move from Sweden to their countries of origin and back to Sweden again. The final report was presented last year. The report contains proposals both for legislative changes and other recommendations aimed at facilitating increased back-and-forth

mobility between Sweden and migrants' countries of origin, in order to promote its positive development effects. It also contains proposals regarding the Diasporas' role as agents of development. As suggested in the beginning of my speech, migrants contribute to development by bringing new skills and ideas to their countries of origin. In this regard, members of the diaspora as well as circular migrants can, for instance, promote democracy and gender equality - two important aspects of Swedish development cooperation - in their countries of origin. The recommendations and proposals of the committee are currently being reviewed within the Government Offices.

As mentioned, Sweden will take over the presidency of the Global Forum on Migration and Development in January 2013. This forum is a unique platform for informal and non-binding dialogue on migration and development between states. Our presidency means, among many other things, that Sweden will chair the Global Forum during the UN High-level Dialogue on Migration and Development in September 2013. It is my ambition that we will use both these opportunities to put the development aspects of migration, as well as mainstreaming migration into the broader policy context, at the forefront of the discussions. We hope to make progress both at the national level, as well as at European and global levels.

Thank you very much for your time!

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