

First of all I would like to welcome you all in this conference organized by the Greek Chairmanship of Human Security Network in cooperation with the International Organization for Migration. A conference which focuses on the impact of climate change on human security of people fleeing their homes due to climate change and the interconnection between climate change and eventual migratory movements.

I would also like to thank Mr. Brunson McKinley, the Director General of the International Organization for Migration, for his initiative that made this event possible and the United Nations University which is currently preparing for us, a policy paper on the subject, to be presented on May 29 and 30<sup>th</sup>, at the international conference we are organizing together with the ministerial meeting that ends our Chairmanship.

Climate change constitutes one of the greatest and most complex challenges the International Community has to deal with today and in the years to come. Climate change induced droughts, floods, wildfires, extreme weather, soil erosion, desertification, deforestation and natural disasters are likely to further intensify preexisting stresses in vulnerable regions. Problems like food insecurity, scarcity of water, reduced agricultural production, population pressures, unequal access to resources, poverty, breakout of epidemics and spreading of diseases, are likely to increase, especially in certain geographical regions such as the Small Island Developing States and the Sub Saharan Africa and affect the every day life of the most vulnerable among the vulnerable.

These obvious threats to human security are very likely to generate forced migratory movements or intensify existing ones from the climate change affected regions. These sorts of challenges may gradually lead to further degradation of infrastructures, weakening of institutions and even threaten peace and security multiplying the propensity for violent conflict.

We are already witnessing population movements directly or indirectly connected to climate change. A phenomenon that is likely to intensify in the coming years. The predictions on the number of the people affected vary tremendously. Between 25 m to 1 b in the next 40 years, while the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC] has suggested an estimation of 150 million people that will move till 2050 due to climate change. So the stakes are high both on the research needed for more accurate predictions and on the mitigation and adaptation efforts needed to minimize this nightmarish prospect.

Of course, climate change alone is not the only -or even the most important- “push factor” for migration. It may have, however, significant influence on migratory patterns and the fact that we cannot securely predict where and when a climate change disaster will strike next, as well as the difficulty to pinpoint the moves of affected populations, calls for collective preparedness.

The migration of large numbers of people (in some cases, with even larger numbers of livestock), can have significant social and environmental repercussions not only for the areas of origin, but also at the areas of destination and the travel routes in between. The stresses created – especially when we are talking about unprepared and unassisted migration – can ignite conflicts that magnify the negative effects of the migration itself. We have already seen that happening in sub-Saharan Africa with devastating human, social, economic and environmental costs. So it is essential that we have thorough early research on the predicted patterns of climate change induced migration and early policy planning for:

- organized movement,
- diverse migration strategies (including circular, temporary or even permanent migration), and
- pre-departure preparation and assistance upon arrival.

The issue of climate change and its interconnection with migratory flows is high on the agenda of many countries as well as international fora, including the United Nations, the International Organization for Migration of course, and the European Union. There is among others a very interesting research project funded by the European Commission, on the “Environmental change and forced migration scenarios”. It is important, however, to further pursue the relevant debate in the appropriate international fora, such as the Global Forum on Migration and Development and the IPCC. We must include the climate change and the environment dimension in the ongoing international debates on migration and vice versa.

We should also address the growing need for the development of appropriate policies which can meet this challenge. One very important tool in this respect can be the implementation of development policies which promote adaptation to climate change. It is essential to integrate sustainable development and climate change concerns into development cooperation policy and programs, as well as into partner countries’ national policies and development strategies.

We believe that the immigrants themselves should also be involved in this development effort.

The Greek development cooperation policy is currently planning, in cooperation with the office of the International Organization for Migration in Athens, to support and finance programs in order to facilitate the contribution of immigrants in Greece -in cooperation with the state- to the development of their home countries. Combating the negative effects of (among others) climate change in their countries of origin, reducing forced migration by diminishing the need for migration and -at the same time-strengthening the ties of the immigrants with the host country, by making them stakeholders to a common project that intends to improve life in their home countries.

Greece has also earmarked funds, in order to finance adaptation projects in the LDCs (Least Developed Countries) and the SIDS (Small Island Developing States) in Africa, the Pacific and the Caribbean, in cooperation

with and through relevant regional and namely the African Union, Caricom and the AOSIS.

Where climate change and forced migration can create a potentially vicious circle of destructive effects, adaptation and development can be combined to construct a virtuous circle of sustainable development with a view to enhancing stability and accomplishing the Millennium Development Goals.

Thank you very much for your attention and I am looking forward to a very interesting and fruitful discussion.