



To: Heads of OSCE PA Delegations
Members of the OSCE PA Bureau

CC: Secretaries of OSCE PA Delegations

21 September 2015

Dear Colleagues,

Having followed with great concern, as I'm sure you have, the recent developments and numerous tragedies related to the migrant crisis in Europe, I wanted to take this opportunity to remind you of some of our previous work in this field.

At the time of our Annual Session in Helsinki the migrant situation was already at a critical level, but the challenges have only mounted since that time. In Helsinki, we addressed a number of issues related to crisis, but I think that the following are particularly relevant in the current circumstances. As the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, we:

128. Applaud[ed] the significant efforts of States neighbouring crisis situations to care for refugees, and call[ed] upon participating States across the OSCE area to increase their efforts to care for people fleeing their homes out of fear of persecution and personal safety, and to ensure the safe and dignified return of IDPs and refugees to their places of permanent residence;

21. Support[ed] the efforts of the European Union to develop migrant reception quotas for Member countries under a new Agency on Migration, call[ed] for an increase in the number of migrants to be accepted and hope[ed] that migrants will be provided with decent conditions of reception in full compliance with fundamental human rights and the international conventions on the protections of migrants and refugees;

There can be no doubt that the thousands of migrants and refugees coming to and moving around Europe present certain economic and security challenges for our countries. However, as we recognized in Helsinki, this is first and foremost a humanitarian situation and we must do all we can to ensure the safety and well-being of these displaced people. I therefore appeal to all of you to advocate within your own country for the policies that we recommended during our Helsinki meeting. In the best interests of our countries and the many thousands of migrants, I encourage an open and tolerant approach to people fleeing for their safety. Closing borders and putting up walls will not resolve anything – it simply avoids responsibility and may even result in further tragedies.

Solutions to this crisis must be developed with a humanitarian approach, and on your behalf I intend to continue promoting the OSCE PA's work in this field. I look forward to continuing an open dialogue with you and other relevant actors as we all seek to find lasting solutions to this ongoing tragedy.

Yours sincerely,



Isabel Santos
Chair, OSCE PA General Committee on Human Rights,
Democracy and Humanitarians Questions