**Crans-Montana Speech, “The Real Challenge Born from the Current Migration Process”, July 2017**

**Your Excellency, Jean-Paul Carteron**

**Excellencies**

**Distinguished guests**

**Dear friends**

**I would like to begin by thanking HE Jean-Paul Carteron, and his team of the Crans-Montana forum, for giving us the opportunity to share our thoughts and vision, about the challenges and opportunities being faced by nations, as a result of migration.**

**I would like to start my contribution by sharing my concern, about the increasingly negative rhetoric, which is surrounding the phenomenon of migration.**

**In recent years, a troubling discourse has surfaced, throughout many nations. Such inadequate discourse cannot be ignored.**

**I believe that we must be especially vigilant, about such negative attitudes, at this critical time in our history.**

**However, most importantly, we must remember that this sense of unease, and these threats of division, are, unfortunately, not new to many nations.**

**Scapegoating others, especially those whom we perceive to be different from ourselves, is a first step, towards the most extreme forms of social exclusion, and towards encouraging the most dangerous populist ideologies.**

**Humanity must not forget the lessons of history.**

**We must encourage everyone, across the globe, to recognise that migration has been part of our past, it is part of our present, and will be part of our future.**

**We must acknowledge that humanity has always been on the move, for different reasons.**

**We must therefore remember that short-sighted perspectives, which see migration only as a source of upheaval, are, in the long-term, immensely damaging to the sustainable peace and prosperity of our world.**

**According to the latest indicators from the United Nations, the number of international migrants stands at around 244 million, and people on the move are greater, in number, than births in the global population.**

**The world cannot afford to ignore the incredible potential of so many people, of all genders, ethnicities, and generations, and their contributions to our societies.**

**I believe that, as an international community, we must do more, to explore the complex causes of migration, and to respond to the factors which drive it.**

**There is a need for us to respond to the root causes of precarity, poverty, and conflict, which force so many people to leave their homes, many unwillingly, however, it is a necessity for them to do so, to save their lives or find a better life.**

**We must admit that although many initiatives, and substantial funds, are afforded to countries, particularly those experiencing poverty and precarity, we need to ensure that such resources and humanitarian aid are actually used to make an effective investment.**

**We must not just spend, by throwing money at the problem.**

**Money needs to be invested to create an appropriate environment for proper education and training; dignified job opportunities; and facilities to adapt to climate change, in line with the 2015 Paris Agreement.**

**These are just a few ideas, and I am confident that during your deliberations, you will identify more necessities for investment.**

**On the other hand, let us admit that migration has played an essential role in the development of our world.**

**However, the reasons behind migration are changing. For example, issues of climate change and regional unrest cannot be ignored, as root causes for people to move.**

**The world should not be complacent, to see whole countries being dilapidated of their peoples, and especially in particular regions, such as Africa and the Middle East.**

**The international community needs to be proactive, and take further action, now.**

**Above all, we must admit, also, that the phenomenon of migration is also providing positive opportunities, for regeneration and growth, across many nations.**

**Let me take an example of a successful attitude towards migration. Germany is a typical example, of how humanitarian considerations have been addressed, while also encouraging migrant participation in the workforce, to support its economy and welfare system.**

**Indeed, according to recent data from the World Economic Forum, migrants already make up between 15 to 20 percent of the working-age population, in many of the world’s advanced economies.**

**A study entitled ‘The Impact of Migration’, released by the International Monetary Fund last year, clearly shows that, over the longer term, migrating workers of diverse skill-sets are bringing substantial benefits to high-level economies.**

**Not only do their contributions increase income, per person, but living standards are seen to improve, as well.**

**Migrants who have higher skills are making their talents available to the marketplace, thereby ensuring that their expertise is integrated into existing competencies.**

**The contributions of high-skilled migrants are of direct and complementary benefit, to our communities and our societies.**

**On the other hand, let us call a spade a spade.**

**I have come across migrants in various counties who have high-level skills and qualifications, who are experiencing exclusion from the dignified work, which they deserve. This happens due to prejudice and discrimination.**

**In fact, they are being engaged in jobs which native populations are discarding. Such jobs are also being made available to lower-skilled migrants, who are performing occupations of critical importance.**

**Furthermore, the impact of low-skilled migrants is significant, because of the way they complement the overall productivity of a nation’s population.**

**Thanks to these layers of complementarity, our economies are capable of functioning more efficiently and effectively, filling gaps in the infrastructures of our nations.**

**The facts make it clear that migration, through its multi-dimensional impact, can make good economic sense.**

**We must, therefore, continue to reassert that migrants are essential collaborators, to maintain a healthy and sustainable workforce in advanced economies.**

**This is particularly necessary, in light of the shrinking working-age population, which is being experienced, for example, across Europe, and in much of the Western world.**

**A specific example of this are indicators from Eurostat, for the 28 EU countries, which says;**

**“*The proportion of people of working age in the EU-28 is shrinking, while the relative number of those retired is expanding. The share of older persons in the total population will increase significantly in the coming decades.*” End quote.**

**Without steady and well-managed sources of migration, the productivity and prosperity of EU economies will suffer.**

**Therefore, we cannot allow the discourse around migration to be hijacked by a short-sighted perspective. Rather, we must work together, in solidarity, to find ways of managing migration flows, more successfully, by addressing the root causes of migration.**

**I believe that we must find innovative approaches to managing migration, in such a way that supports our national needs and infrastructures; that creates stronger alliances and networks between our different nations; and that safeguards the fundamental human rights of migrants, themselves, and also ensuring that native populations do not suffer, due to the lack of a level playing field, particularly in the world of work.**

**It is a matter of national interest to promote strategies for the inclusion of new workers into our economies.**

**I am also convinced that our economic interests will never be achieved, unless they are also met by an equal investment in human potential. This will only be possible when we promote the successful and respectful inclusion of migrants within our societies.**

**Such strategies for inclusion must be part of a global social solidarity approach, which recognises the essential value of migrants’ participation within our communities, as respected contributors and collaborators, towards one common goal of peace, prosperity, and wellbeing.**

**For this reason, we must ensure that the peoples of our nations are not overwhelmed by an angry rhetoric of exclusion and division.**

**It is true that no nation can tackle the complex and multidimensional factors of migration alone.**

**As was stated, many times, during Malta’s Presidency of the Council of the European Union, it is essential that our nations continue to build solid partnerships, in particular, between the countries that are most exposed to substantial migration flows.**

**There is an urgent need for our countries to show solidarity with one another, especially at times of crisis. For this reason, we must respond to the call, currently being made by Italy, to share the enormous load of increased migration, by effectively supporting them.**

**We must form international relationships, which are based on mutual trust, in order to ensure that our international responses to the phenomenon of migration are a team effort.**

**Let me reiterate that we must invest in effective strategies, rather than simply throw money at the issue.**

**Our resources must be focused, where they will do the most good, by working in synergies, to effectively manage migration flows and, where necessary, to provide essential humanitarian assistance.**

**We must ensure that migrants are not permitted to fall victim to exploitation and modern day slavery, while they are on their journeys through countries of transit or destination. Nor should they suffer at the hands of exploitative employers.**

**Some of the most pressing challenges, being posed by migration within our societies, are often the result of unsuccessful or incomplete inclusion policies. These have repercussions on all areas of a country’s social, economic, and cultural life.**

**For example, we should consider the escalating precarity, as reported by indicators from the International Monetary Fund, that is being experienced in some of our nations’ urban areas. It is in these areas that employment opportunities are more numerous, and there is, therefore, a resulting density of migrant workers.**

**Migrants who are active in more informal sectors of business, industry, and services, often find themselves being absorbed into city infrastructures, which are sometimes unable to support their effective inclusion.**

**Therefore, I believe that we must collaborate, to create specific strategies for inclusion within urban environments.**

**Let us take every opportunity to share best practices, and take a city-level approach, which focuses our attention on the experiences of migrants and native communities, themselves.**

**In this way, we shall be listening to the concerns, experiences, and aspirations of all stakeholders. Indeed, we shall be gaining valuable insight into their situations, and exploring concrete paths forward.**

**For this reason, we must continue to emphasise the role of structured processes of democratic participation, which are a cornerstone of our democracies.**

**We must celebrate the opportunities that diversity brings, by listening to one another, and by taking action, in response to the information that we gain.**

**My experiences in Malta have shown me that a lack of dialogue between communities is often at the root of so much conflict and distrust.**

**For example, through consultations carried out by my Foundation, that is, the President’s Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society, with diverse migrant and refugee groups in Malta, it became apparent that many of these individuals and their families were finding it difficult to connect with the native population on a social level.**

**However, thanks to the active efforts made by civil society organisations, opportunities for relationship-building and community-level connections have begun to take shape, resulting in more social cohesion and a growing sense of inclusion.**

**While it is essential to implement bottom-up strategies for social inclusion, our plans cannot be limited to local or national efforts alone.**

**We must take advantage of all opportunities, such as today’s meeting, to have a regional, and international, impact. Our responses to the phenomenon of migration must, at every level, reinforce a strong sense of good governance, and faith in the rule of law.**

**For this reason, we must promote a rights-based approach, which upholds the intrinsic dignity of the many individuals who migrate, in search of peace, prosperity, and wellbeing.**

**A strong emphasis on universal human rights must be at heart of all our efforts, to achieve global social solidarity, alongside sustainable economic development.**

**When we accept that processes of migration are bringing substantial benefits to our economies, then we must also commit ourselves to strategies for respectful socio-economic inclusion.**

**I believe that some of the most urgent and practical actions, which we must take, as part of this multi-level approach to migration, include cultural training and language learning; support for migrants, who are searching for employment; more efficient ways of recognising the existing qualifications and skills portfolios of migrants, when they arrive in a destination country; and more effective gateways into employment and entrepreneurship.**

**Such efforts must be paralleled by an equally strong investment in the native populations of our nations.**

**We must boost the confidence that our people have, in the effectiveness of our economies, and the role of migration to safeguard our success.**

**This can be achieved by ensuring that our native populations have increased opportunities for further education; that they are exposed to awareness campaigns, about the benefits of diversity, and the economic strength which it brings; and the upgrading of our workers’ skills, into new and innovative sectors of the economy.**

**Moreover, I believe that our authorities and policymakers must make a determined effort to ensure that essential public services are not overburdened, as a result of changing demographics.**

**The provision of adequate healthcare, infrastructural support, and educational services must be effectively regulated, in order to avoid social tensions and the risks of radicalisation and conflict.**

**On concluding, let me once again say that the real struggle we are facing is not about whether migration is a force for good within our economies.**

**All indicators tell us that migration is essential, due to the shrinking native workforce, as a result of falling birthrates.**

**Rather, we cannot afford to allow the discourse around migration to be hijacked, by small-minded perspectives of populist protectionism.**

**It is time for us to be proactive and forward-thinking in our policies. We must allow the full benefits of migration to outweigh any short-term challenges.**

**In the words of Ian Goldin, Professor of Globalisation and Development at the University of Oxford;**

**“*Migration has always been one of the most important drivers of human progress and dynamism.*” End quote.**

**Therefore, let us keep ourselves on the right side of history.**

**Let me urge us all, and our authorities and civil societies, to work together, to find more effective ways of managing migration, thereby ensuring sustainable peace, long-term prosperity, and meaningful wellbeing, for all the peoples of our nations, and all of humanity.**

**Thank you for your attention.**