



OPENING STATEMENT

Rep. Alcee L. Hastings
Chairman

**“Crossing Borders, Keeping Connected:
Women, Migration and Development in the OSCE Region”**
April 24, 2008

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to call to order this hearing of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe on women, migration and development in the OSCE region.

We have an excellent panel with two distinguished witnesses who are going to share with us their knowledge of this issue.

And there is much on this issue that we need to learn in order to meet the needs of these women, their families, and their home countries.

Migration is a complex issue that every country deals with: some countries are sending migrants abroad, some countries are transit points, and others are the destination country. This status can be fluid and change over time, and as we have seen to be the case in many of the OSCE countries, particularly in Southeast Europe, some countries are a combination of all three.

Best estimates are that about 3 percent of the world’s population lives outside their country of origin. In 2002 the number of international migrants was 175 million. To put that into perspective, that’s more people than the entire population of Russia picking up and moving abroad. By 2050, the number of migrants is expected to rise by another 55 million people to 230 million.

The number of women migrants is on the rise. In fact, the number of women migrants worldwide has been steadily increasing over the years. If we go back to 1960, women migrants made up about 47 percent of the total number of people living outside their country of origin.

Today that percentage overall is about 50 percent—although in many countries women account for 70 or 80 percent of the total.

And while the numbers themselves are impressive, perhaps the more important issue at hand is that the economic role of women migrants is changing. The United Nations has found that increasingly women are migrating on their own as main economic providers and heads of household, and fewer are migrating as dependents of their husbands. That change in dynamic surely requires us as policymakers to be cognizant of these new facts and respond appropriately.

And the plight of women migrants is a hometown issue for most of us. In my home state of Florida, we have some of the highest concentrations of farm workers. More than one-quarter of all farm workers in the United States are women, but it takes three farm worker women to earn the same amount of money earned by two men.

Women who work in the farms are regularly subjected to sexual harassment, assault, and rape; and they are exposed to some of the most dangerous conditions in the fields.

I'm interested to hear from our witnesses their suggestions on how to respond to the new generation of women migrants, but before I turn to the panelists I'd like to recognize the special role my fellow Commissioner, Representative Solis, plays on this issue.

In addition to serving as a Commissioner on the Helsinki Commission, Ms. Solis also serves as the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's Special Representative on Migration, and as such her work is particularly focused on the issue of migration within the OSCE region. She brings to that position extensive experience on the issue of immigration here in the United States and I'm pleased that she is here today for this hearing.

I would also like to note that with Ms. Solis' active participation, the Commission will focus more of its attention on the issue of immigration and our next event will be a field hearing in Los Angeles on May 9 to study the regional impacts and opportunities for migration. I encourage all who are interested to attend that event.

[Recognize other members for their opening statements]

Thank you, and now let's turn to our witnesses.

Joining us today is Dr. Susan Martin, Director of the Institute for the Study of International Migration at Georgetown University; and Dr. Manuel Orozco with the Remittances and Development Program at the Inter-American Dialogue.

We have distributed the full biographies of both witnesses to the audiences so in the interest of time I won't read them to you. Since this is a hearing focused on women, I will call on Dr. Martin first. Dr. Martin, please go ahead with your statement.