**Grußwort von Bot. Gernot Erler**

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anlässlich der Podiumsdiskussion „The OSCE in the migration and refugee crisis” (16. März 2017)

In 2016, OSCE participating States recognized migration and the opportunities and challenges resulting from it as an important, cross-dimensional topic deserving more attention. The Hamburg Ministerial Council agreed on a decision on the OSCE’s role in the Governance of Large Movements of Migrants and Refugees. Earlier that year, the German OSCE Chairmanship had organized a special meeting of the Permanent Council dedicated to the topic. The meeting had been thoroughly prepared by an Informal Working Group which took stock of the OSCE’s migration-related expertise and developed recommendations on how to address the topic in the future.

The recognition of migration as a topic to be addressed by the OSCE by participating States is a crucial step. This is in particular true for the OSCE bodies confronted most closely and directly with migration movements over the past two years: The OSCE Field Operations in South-Eastern Europe. The research on the impact of the increased movement of migrants and refugees on the so-called „Balkan route“ on the work of the OSCE field operations in South-Eastern Europe presented today is therefore very valuable: it offers detailed analysis on how the OSCE Missions supported their respective host governments in addressing this challenge. Affected to variable degrees, the Field Operations identified different responses on which the study sheds light: ranging from an increase in monitoring and reporting activities of cross-border movements to strengthening the co-operation between the field operations and, also very important, liaising with civil society organizations to promote respect for human rights in all actions taken.

I therefore thank the Southeast Europe Association (SOG) and the three authors for conducting this study and providing us with a thorough analysis of the different steps taken. It shows how the OSCE Field Operations in South-Eastern Europe are able to respond to new challenges proactively, quickly and flexibly and thereby underlines how valuable their work on the ground is to the OSCE and their host governments. Since the opportunities and challenges resulting from migration seem to persist in the foreseeable future, this study will certainly contribute to a comprehensive approach of the OSCE to manage this task in a spirit of co-operation and solidarity.