



Statement

by Mr. Konstantine Surguladze, State Minister, the Office of the State Minister of Georgia for Diaspora Issues

2013 Diaspora Ministerial Conference

Geneva, 18 June 2013

Mr. Chair

Mr. Director General

Ladies and Gentlemen

At the outset, I use this opportunity to congratulate you, Director Swing with re-election and wish a successful term.

It is indeed my privilege to express deepest of gratitude towards the International Organization for migration for organizing high level conference, bringing together officials responsible for planning and implementing Diaspora related policy; The event enables us to gain and share insights from various parts of the world, discuss good practices, to start and develop collaboration over the mutually significant issues.

I am honored to share our Government's supportive and cooperative approach towards Diaspora. Georgia has a special governmental entity, the office of the State Minister of Georgia for Diaspora Issues, entirely responsible for being at service of Georgian nationals abroad and facilitating their contribution to their homeland, as well to the country of their destination. Without a doubt, we share the position that Diaspora greatly contributes to the development of both, countries of origin and destination and our Diaspora can be viewed as a contributing force.

It is worth mentioning that there is also Committee on Diaspora and Caucasus Issues in the parliament of Georgia. which, as well is an able entity designed to support Diaspora matters.

New draft document on "Diaspora Relation Strategy" is elaborated by our office. We have created concept and are discussing it with a wide circle of our society, including experts, nongovernmental organizations, international organizations and Georgian Diaspora organizations abroad. This document will be further discussed with parliament and the government of Georgia. We are involving public in forming the policy on

diaspora and believe that such document will be most democratic, transparent, effective and practical.

Most of our compatriots are deeply integrated with the country of destination, they are aware of particularity and special nature both, of their hosting country, as well as their motherland. Their involvement in the political processes going on in Georgia will deepen the relations between the countries of their origin and the host country. Diaspora could play the role of the „Ambassadors" of Georgia to their host societies, thus creating and facilitating important cooperative links in the field of culture, education, economics, science and in the wide context - encourage the bilateral relation between Georgia and their country of destination.

Diaspora participation in the political life of the country of origin is very important. Diaspora members can play a role even in the democratic processes, especially when granted the right to vote, either in their country of origin or in the country of residence.

One of the major supporting elements for the benefit of Georgian Diaspora is creating and further developing relevant legislative framework. In this context, **The Law on Compatriots, Residing Abroad and Diaspora Organizations** was initiated by our office. It implies determination of a legal statute of a compatriot, residing abroad and Diaspora organization on a legislative level. Legal guarantees, which are expanded on compatriots, residing abroad by the Georgian state is determined in this law, thus Georgian state encourages compatriots to maintain their ties to their country of origin, national identity and motivate their return to Georgia. The Law aims to support the activities of Diaspora, keep their linkage to Georgian history and culture, support strengthening the Georgian Diaspora organizations abroad. The Law is providing them with certain privileges in various fields, including a right to get secondary and high education in Georgia by state sponsorship, participation in special purpose state funded projects, etc. Through similar relevant legislative initiatives, our office, in cooperation with other governmental institutions wishes to facilitate Diaspora engagement and create strong legislative bases, protecting their rights.

Diaspora can significantly contribute to the economic development of their home countries via Remittances, Diaspora Direct Investments, assistance in the marketing of home countries as Foreign Direct Investment destinations, and transfer of their intellectual and technological knowledge.

Important directions of the "Diaspora Relation Strategy" are investment attraction with the assistance of Georgian Diaspora and transfer of intellectual resources. Our office, in cooperation with relevant authorities (GNIA, GCCI, MoESD and other line Ministries) plans to create data base of potential Diaspora investors, also individuals occupied in industrial, financial, agricultural and service sector companies abroad.

I would like to use this opportunity and once again express my gratitude to the IOM and its Development Fund for providing the opportunity for the Ministry to gain experience and know-how to conceptualize the national strategy on Diaspora and support the development of the internet based platform as a global social network for Georgian Diaspora. This project will culminate with an international conference on 13-15 November this year with the objective to present the Georgian Model of Diaspora engagement for development. I would like to bring this forthcoming event to your attention. Georgia will be very pleased to host renowned experts in this field and top

management of IOM headquarters to contribute to this international high level event. This will be one more step we take together in our dialogue on Diaspora engagement in the context of Migration and Development to find joint responses to migration challenges.

Thank you

