

## PRESS RELEASE

### **Ministerial Conference on Refugee Protection and International Migration: The Almaty Process**

*Almaty, 5 June 2013* – Countries attending a regional conference on migration and refugee protection today agreed to enhance regional dialogue and strengthen cooperation on migration to facilitate regular movements, while ensuring protection and respect for the human rights and access to asylum.

The Ministerial Conference on Refugee Protection and International Migration: the Almaty Process, was opened by Mr. Erlan Idrissov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The conference is organized and financed by the Government of Kazakhstan, with the support of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

The conference brings together 9 governments from Central Asia and neighbouring countries<sup>1</sup> to explore collaborative responses to challenges of mixed migration and refugee protection through the launching of a Regional Consultative Process on Migration - the Almaty Process.

In his welcome speech the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan Mr. Erlan Idrissov noted that Kazakhstan fully recognizes its involvement and responsibility in addressing the challenges of international migration. The Government is undertaking significant efforts to implement activities in the key areas of the migration policy, which is one of the promising areas of humanitarian cooperation between Kazakhstan and international organizations.

Mr. António Guterres, UNHCR High Commissioner for Refugees, called on governments to develop immigration policies that ensured basic human rights. "States have the right to define their own immigration and national security policies provided they do so in respect for human dignity and basic rights, and in ways that ensure international protection is granted to those who need it." He also underlined that the Almaty Process allows countries to develop response mechanisms that address the legitimate concerns of States, such as border management and security, while ensuring that those who wish to seek asylum can do so, irrespective of the circumstances in which they have arrived at the border.

The IOM Deputy Director General, Ms. Laura Thompson, noted that regional and global economic integration, widening income differentials between countries, demographic trends, economic or political instability and environmental disasters will continue driving migration making it an increasingly pivotal issue for countries in the region. "There is no single formula for the management of migration that is universally applicable. Different solutions have to be developed in response to different contexts, and a platform for regional collaboration and dialogue that is flexible and responsive enough to provide such solutions is welcomed. Throughout its more than sixty-year history IOM has continued to work with governments to design and implement comprehensive migration solutions that are practical and respect the human rights of migrants. Regional collaboration and dialogue is today more than ever recognized as an essential part of any such response." Ms.

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<sup>1</sup> The Republic of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Republic of Azerbaijan, Islamic Republic of Iran, Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the Republic of Turkey.

Thompson welcomed the launch of the new Regional dialogue and Consultative process on migration and pledged IOM's continuous support to it.

The Deputy Minister of Interior of the Republic of Kazakhstan Mr. Erlik Kenenbaev, who was part of the Kazakh delegation, emphasized: "We think that in view of the increasing migration flows in the region and challenges related to them, there will be a need for the development of cooperation in this sphere among the States concerned, and it is quite possible that the geographic scope of the Almaty Process will be expanding". Also, the Deputy Minister of Interior assured that Kazakhstan remains committed to such cooperation, as demonstrated by the offer of the Government of Kazakhstan to host on a permanent basis the Almaty Process Secretariat and its offer to be the first Chair.

Following constructive discussions, participating States agreed to strengthen regional cooperation to take advantage of these opportunities and address the growing migration challenges.

For more information, please contact:

UNHCR: Ms. Zhanna Dossova, tel.: +7 777 556 22 77, e-mail: [dossova@unhcr.org](mailto:dossova@unhcr.org);

IOM: Ms. Aliya Alikova, tel.: +7 777 779 28 74, e-mail: [aalikova@iom.int](mailto:aalikova@iom.int);

MFA of the Republic of Kazakhstan: Mr. Seiilkhan Aubakirov, tel.: +7 701555 37 69, e-mail: [s.aubakirov@mfa.kz](mailto:s.aubakirov@mfa.kz).