



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

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Statements by the Organizers

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Welcome Speech by Mr. Erlan Idrissov

Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan

Dear conference participants and guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

First of all allow me to welcome you all and express my gratitude for your participation in the second session of the Regional Ministerial Conference on Refugee Protection and International Migration in Almaty.

International migration is a global phenomenon, the scope, complexity and impact of which keep growing. As mentioned in the recent Report “International Migration and Development” by the UN Secretary-General, there is no country in the world that is not affected by migration flows.

To address this, efforts are made towards exercising influence to regulate these flows. We all witness such efforts within the framework of the United Nations Organization and its respective units, including through regional commissions, the activities of the Global Forum on Migration and Development, the UN Global Migration Group, and the preparation for the High Level Dialogue on Migration and Development to take place this year at the forthcoming 68th session of the UN General Assembly.

Issues related to the regulation of migration flows are also on the top of the agenda of the young Central Asian countries. Challenges of irregular migration such as human trafficking, refugees and drug trafficking as well as the threat of terrorism, determine the need to improve measures of migration regulation and to consider it a priority for the Central Asian States.

Kazakhstan is in the center of migration flows. It is at the same time a country of immigration, emigration and transit migration. The growth of Kazakhstan’s economy has turned it into an attractive place to seek employment for nationals of neighboring and overseas countries.

Kazakhstan is also one of the regional leaders in terms of the number of refugees accepted. Thus, in the years of independence, more than 15 thousand refugees have found asylum and protection on the territory of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Our country is fully aware of its involvement and its responsibility in addressing issues of international migration. We stem from our belief that not a single country in the world is able to resolve alone the problems caused by migration flows. Their rates of growth and scope outpace States’ capacities to regulate them and respond. At the same time, co-ordination and cooperation can contribute to a more effective management of the international movement of people, to minimize the threat of crime and law violation accompanying migration.

This is why in recent years efforts are made in our country to develop a legal framework for bilateral and multilateral cooperation with international partners.

In the last year, national bodies together with UNHCR, IOM, UNDP, ILO, OSCE and other organizations have progressed in addressing issues of refugees, labor migration, the prevention of irregular migration and human trafficking, migration policy development and in sustaining efforts to bring migration related legislation in the Republic of Kazakhstan in line with international standards.

In cooperation with these organizations, the legislation in the country is updated and a number of programs are implemented including programs on developing dialogue and capacity building in the area of managing labor migration processes in Central Asia, and improving the management of border crossing by migrants etc.

This work is carried out within the context of globalization and the relevant processes of integration at the regional level.

We are determined to expand cooperation with developed countries in the area of international labor migration in order to enhance control over illegal labor migration, exploitation of migrants and to ensure civilized access of specialists from countries of our region to the labor markets of economically developed countries. This is to include the preparation and signing of common legal instruments that contribute to the creation of a foundation for a mutually beneficial cooperation in the area of migration and development of common labor market instruments. Collective efforts in regulating legal migration flows will decrease significantly the possibilities for irregular migration.

We also consider it necessary for the member-States of the regional associations to review their commitments on suppressing irregular migration flows; to systematize and encode both national legislation on migration issues and international treaties signed within the framework of international organizations and to facilitate the ratification of already signed treaties and agreements by national parliaments.

In recent years migration policy all over the world is increasingly characterized by a complex approach and a close coordination of its different directions. Particularly the organization of migration control and the hosting of migrants are linked with ensuring the necessary facilities, adaptation, integration and the maintenance of an adequate level of interethnic relations within the society.

The government of Kazakhstan is doing a lot of work in major areas of migration policy, which is one of the perspective directions of the humanitarian cooperation of Kazakhstan with international organizations. A number of positive trends are noted in the country on migration flows: negative outcomes have been prevented and minimized; a legislative foundation has been set to ensure and protect the rights and interests of migrants while maintaining a net migration rate; labor migration is evolving into an increasingly important process, which is directly linked to successful economic achievement, social stability and a liberal migration policy in the country.

Kazakhstan is interested in having a single policy towards migrants from the Southern Asia and a more flexible migration policy for the entire post-soviet space. This approach will make it possible to develop a more objective forecast for the country's social and economic development, to ensure a decent social level for its own population and to achieve sustainable reduction of crime rates in this area.

Thus, as we view necessary to deepen regional dialogue, we welcome the development of the Almaty Process, which was initiated in March 2011 during the regional conference on mixed migration in Almaty. The Almaty Process aims to complement harmoniously similar processes on migration implemented in other regions, specifically – to speak of geographically close regions – the Budapest and Prague Processes.

Taking advantage of the opportunity, I would like to mention the success of the 5th Conference of the Budapest Process that took place in Istanbul a month and a half ago. The Conference noted that the

Budapest Process is developing into a balanced intergovernmental dialogue on issues of migration management that covers the entire spectrum of matters, including legal and labor migration, integration and irregular migration, repatriation and readmission, human trafficking, migrant smuggling, international protection as well as issues of migration and development.

Thus, consultative platforms are being developed globally that help to promote concerted activities at the regional level, confidence building, better understanding of migration issues, achieving consensus and capacity building amongst their participants.

A few days ago (22-23 May 2013) the 4th global meeting of Chairmen and Secretaries of the regional consultative processes took place in Lima, the capital of Peru, that confirmed the important need of such processes, their promising viability and the need for their interaction.

It is well known that based on the outcomes of the first conference the adopted Almaty Declaration called for concerted efforts of all stakeholders – governments, international organizations and NGOs. The principles of the Declaration imply common partnerships at the national, regional and international levels, which are absolutely necessary to enhance coordination and cooperation.

This Conference is designed to consolidate the outcomes of the first Conference, meaning to create an institutional basis for the regional consultative process or in other words to launch the “Almaty Process”. I would like to thank all the countries that participated in the preparation process as well as UNHCR and IOM for their meaningful and organizational contribution to this Conference.

Migration problems can be solved. Success is guaranteed through the development of open dialogue, the enhancement of bilateral, regional and global cooperation and coordination. Collaboration of different countries from different regions within the common framework of these processes will undoubtedly become the key factor to ensuring the successful tackling of migration and refugee issues all over the world.

In conclusion I would like to wish all the conference participants fruitful work and promising results.

Thank you for your attention.

Opening Remarks by Mr. António Guterres

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Mr. Chairman,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure that I join you today as a co-organizer of this second Ministerial Conference on Refugee Protection and International Migration, together with IOM and the Government of Kazakhstan. And May I Mr. Chairman, express my very deep gratitude and appreciation to the hospitality of the Government of Kazakhstan. It is not only a generous and warm hospitality; it is a very efficient hospitality. So thank you very much.

I am encouraged to see the strong representation from the countries participating in the Almaty Process, as this speaks to the importance that asylum and migration issues have in this region.

In the two years since the first Conference and the adoption of the Almaty Declaration, the consultations amongst the Central Asian States have made very good progress, which clearly illustrates their commitment and dedication, and a keen understanding of the present and future challenges that the Almaty Process seeks to address.

Allow me to begin with a few general reflections on the present nature of forced displacement, and the wider phenomenon of people on the move, which so profoundly shapes our world today and, I believe, will continue to be one of its defining characteristics for decades to come.

A few decades ago things looked simple; there were people that moved from one country to another in search of a better life, in search of jobs, education for their families. These were economic migrants. And there were people forced to flee their country because of war or persecution and these were refugees according to the 1951 Convention. As the time goes by, this distinction sometimes becomes blurred. First of all, because they always or many times travel on the same route, are submitted to the same smugglers and traffickers – and also because we are witnessing more and more people forced to flee for reasons that do not qualify them as refugees according to the 1951 Convention.

Forced displacement today affects more people, and for longer periods of time, than only a decade ago. It is also growing in complexity. Conflict and political upheaval, the traditional drivers of displacement, are no longer the only reasons forcing people to abandon their homes. In an increasingly imbalanced world, displacement is often compounded and reinforced by factors such as the effects of climate change, population growth, food insecurity, socio-economic disparities, and water scarcity and others.

A growing number of people are uprooted by natural disasters or lose their livelihoods to drought, with climate change becoming the key factor accelerating all other drivers of forced displacement. Its slow-onset effects, like desertification, environmental degradation and shrinking agricultural productivity risk displacing hundreds of thousands of people in the future.

While the nature of forced displacement is rapidly evolving, the responses available to the international community have not kept pace. Mixed migration flows are the most likely scenario for

forced population movements of the future. This requires States to develop more effective response mechanisms so as to avoid serious protection gaps for persons in need. The Almaty Process is an excellent example of regional cooperation to establish such new responses through close cooperation among governments, with the support of other stakeholders.

Central Asia has always been a cultural and economic crossroads, and the population movements the region has witnessed will only grow in scale and complexity as a result of all of the interlinked factors I have mentioned. In addition, the Central and South West Asia regions will be key to international peace and stability, for example in the context of political and security transitions in Afghanistan scheduled for 2014.

Excellencies,

Having been in Government myself for many years, I know that no State can disregard the importance of ensuring the security of its citizens, their social and economic well-being and the cohesion of society. States also 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.

The Almaty Process allows countries to develop response mechanisms that address the legitimate concerns of States, such as border management and security, while respecting international norms and standards. This is needed to ensure that those who wish to seek asylum can do so, irrespective of the circumstances in which they have arrived at the border.

This means guaranteeing access to territory, fair treatment of asylum claims and identifying those who may be in need of protection for other reasons. Implementing these principles in mixed migratory movements is challenging, and requires close cooperation and dialogue among the States concerned.

The consultations that have taken place so far have been an important step in helping to address the challenges of mixed migration. But looking to the future, meaningful solutions can only come through a regional cooperation framework that guarantees effective cooperation among States.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

UNHCR's attention in Central Asia is focused on preserving and strengthening the asylum space available to refugees, efforts to reduce and prevent statelessness, ensuring appropriate emergency preparedness and response, and on helping States manage the mixed migratory flows they are experiencing. But, of course, we cannot lose sight of durable solutions. This means working towards voluntary repatriation and sustainable reintegration, providing support to host countries and communities, and provision of legal migration opportunities.

There has been significant progress in all of these areas. Our close cooperation with the countries concerned has helped bring about important achievements and tangible improvements in the lives of our people of concern.

Turkmenistan has been making exceptional efforts in recent years to reduce statelessness. This has involved acceding to the two Statelessness Conventions, and to initiate to register and document thousands of undocumented persons across the country. This, we hope, will facilitate a solution for the plight of persons with undetermined nationality. In Kazakhstan, the Government's Special Report on the situation of asylum-seekers, refugees and stateless persons, endorsed personally by the

President, aims at significantly improving legislation as well as developing standard operating procedures for persons of concern to UNHCR. It is our earnest hope that the Government of Kazakhstan will soon develop an inter-Ministerial Action Plan. UNHCR stands ready to assist in this process.

The Kyrgyz Republic, in response to the inter-ethnic tension it experienced in 2010, has made good progress in developing a national peace and reconciliation initiative, and was recently selected as a pilot country to develop a durable solutions strategy for the sustainable return of refugees and IDPs. Similarly, Uzbekistan's efficient response to the 2010 refugee crisis, as well as Tajikistan's intensive efforts in capacity building for emergency response and preparedness, confirm the importance regional governments attach to issues of forced displacement.

The excellent collaboration UNHCR has been enjoying with Governments participating in the Almaty Process is yet another example of the fruitful partnership we have with the Central Asia region. As our collective challenges in responding to the needs of people on the move become increasingly complex and resource-intensive, it is crucial that we further strengthen our cooperation in this area. Continued robust support by the international community remains also imperative.

Allow me also to say how encouraged I am to see this region taking on a more central role in promoting peace and stability, be it through hosting the 10th OSCE Summit in Astana in 2010, the successful meetings of the Foreign Ministers of the Islamic World in Dushanbe and in Astana, or the various other regional initiatives, such as the Istanbul Process, aimed at promoting peace, reconciliation and development. In an initiative more specifically related to UNHCR's work, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Government of Turkmenistan and UNHCR successfully co-organized an International Ministerial Conference on Refugees in the Muslim World in Ashgabat in May of last year.

Distinguished Delegates,

The Almaty Process addresses several of the humanitarian aspects of the challenges facing this region. To ensure that the protection needs of refugees, displaced persons and stateless individuals are met, a successful response to these challenges can only come from a regional and collaborative response. I commend the Governments participating in this process for their recognition of the importance of such a regional dialogue.

For the same reason, I am enormously pleased to see the full and equal engagement in the Process of other countries that share common migration concerns with the five Central Asian republics. UNHCR and IOM remain deeply committed to supporting the Almaty Process through the development and implementation of a broader Regional Cooperation Framework and Action Plan.

I would like to close my remarks by again thanking the Government of Kazakhstan, IOM and all other stakeholders for making the Almaty Process possible. I am confident that, through this Process, we will be able to bring concrete solutions to the important challenges which the growing complexity of forced displacement and mixed migration pose to not only this region, but also to the world. And let me say very briefly when we sometimes witness a debate in many countries of the world, including in my part of the world that are so negative about the impact of migration, that it is my deep belief that the movements of people in the modern world are part of the solution and not part of the problem.

Thank you very much.

Welcome remarks by Ms. Laura Thompson

Deputy Director-General of the International Organization for Migration

Your Excellency, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan,

Your Excellency, the High Commissioner for Refugees,

Your Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

IOM is honoured to be a co-organizer of this important gathering with our generous host, the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, and with the UNHCR, our long-standing partner. Several years ago, I already had the pleasure of being here in Almaty on the occasion of a ministerial gathering of many of the countries present today, which resulted in the unanimous adoption of the Almaty Declaration. The Declaration acknowledged the need to address multiple challenges resulting from complex migration dynamics and mixed migratory movements in Central Asia and the wider region, and called for regional cooperation to that end. I would like to congratulate the Government of Kazakhstan for taking the lead in ensuring that the Almaty Declaration is put into practice and for championing the cause of regional cooperation on migration in the Central Asian region and increasingly, beyond. I would also like to acknowledge the efforts of all the other States that continue to work together to advance regional dialogue through, among others, the launch of a new regional consultative process on migration – the Almaty Process – the reason for which we are gathered here today.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As the lead agency on migration with a global footprint, IOM has a clear view of the tremendous and increasing importance of migration in all world regions. Roughly one out of every seven people on the planet today is on the move, including some 214 million international migrants and 740 million internal migrants. We also know that this trend will continue - with today's 214 million international migrants expected to become more than 400 million by 2040. There is thus a lot at stake given the imperative need to ensure that migration is humanely and responsibly managed.

The population flows within, into and through the countries present here today are complex and include both voluntary and forced migration; regular and irregular movements driven by a variety of economic, political and environmental forces. Here, as in many other parts of the world, the search for gainful employment is a key factor driving migration. And while today there is widely recognised that labour migration contributes to economic growth and development, unless strong and effective mechanisms for its management are in place, it can also present security risks for states and individuals, including increased vulnerability of migrant workers.

Significant irregular migration flows in the region are a serious concern, as irregular migration, in particular its more corrosive forms of smuggling and trafficking, remains connected with transnational organised crime, including trafficking for labour purposes. Furthermore, the multi-ethnic set up, competition and tensions over scarce resources and political instability in the wider region represent other critical challenges that will likely continue to trigger internal and cross-border movements, including forced migration within the region. Environmental degradation and recurrent natural disasters are additional factors impacting mobility.

So, how can we manage such complex migration flows in a way that brings together the needs of the State with the protection of individual rights and freedoms?

The two are certainly not mutually exclusive. There is, of course, no magic migration formula, nor one that is universally applicable. There is, however, a possible "high road migration scenario" that, on the one hand, respects national sovereignty to determine who enters a country and that those who enter respect local laws and customs; and, on the other hand, respects the age-old desire of people to migrate to seek a better life. In other words, there is the need to preserve the integrity of migration as mankind's oldest poverty reduction and development strategy, and along with it, the person's expectation that his / her rights as a person will not be affected by this decision and be honored and respected when they do migrate.

Throughout its 60 plus year history, IOM, together with a variety of partners, has helped governments to reconcile these various elements and design and implement creative solutions. I would like to highlight four key elements that would need to be part of this solution in this region:

- a. Combatting irregular migration and all the challenges stemming from it remain a key priority in migration management in the world around. The solutions here point toward better control and screening mechanisms, such as better border systems and more secure travel documents, as well as expanded cooperation on and capacity building of border officials and relevant institutions for care and return of irregular migrants who have no permission to remain in the country.
- b. That said, combatting irregular migration must go hand in hand with expanding channels for regular migration, creation of decent employment opportunities and strengthening links between migration and development. In the Central Asian region, people are increasingly migrating across borders for economic reasons to look for work. Much of this movement is irregular, which not only increases the vulnerability of these migrants, but also negates any development gains that this migration might have generated. Well-managed, legal corridors for labor migrants will ensure that they can develop their own human potential, become productive, and can invest properly in their families and home communities. At the same time, the benefits of migration need to be channeled into socio-economic development strategies at the national level. Countries in the Central Asian sub-region are some of the biggest recipients of remittances in the world as a percentage of their GDP. However, the developmental gains of this monetary income are limited.
- c. Trafficking in human beings is another serious challenge for the region in terms of both, scale and violation of human rights. The exploitation of migrants is commonplace, and victims are deprived of basic rights such as the right to earn a wage and the right to free movement. Labor exploitation of migrants is particularly prevalent in this region because of the high degree of irregular movement for employment purposes. Countries in the region have made efforts in cooperating with each other to address trafficking issues and welcome assistance from the international community. In this regard, IOM will continue to strengthening regional co-operation and developing coordinated actions in the fight against trafficking in human beings and exploitation. Such cooperative actions may include improvement of the legislative framework aimed at better regulating labor migration and fighting human trafficking. Only if we win this battle, we can achieve IOM's strategic vision to maximize the potential for

migration to contribute to the development and economic growth of the countries where poverty is the main push factor.

- d. Given the fact that this is a natural disasters prone region with a mix of environmental and political challenges, we must also be ready to address the migration-related aspects of natural disasters or man-made crises. This includes supporting the governments and communities in dealing with causes and consequences of possible mass internal or cross-border flows of people triggered by a crisis; it also means assisting international migrants caught in a crisis in their destination countries, or displaced populations and the affected communities in urban areas, as well as dealing with the heightened risk of human trafficking among crisis-affected populations, or tackling the emerging issue of environmental migration. IOM has experience in dealing with all these and other migration consequences of crises around the globe. However, in the midst of a complex migration crisis, without proper planning and preparations, many of these aspects which require systematic and consistent institutional response can be overlooked to the detriment of the individuals, communities as well the society in general. This is something IOM is increasingly working to address. Based on its rich operational experience and recognizing the need for a complex view of human mobility in the crisis context, IOM has developed a *Migration Crisis Operational Framework (MCOF)*. This tool allows a better understanding of complex mobility patterns related to crises, increases the level of preparedness and enables a more effective operational response to crises. In November last year, you, our membership, approved this Framework by consensus, so this is what we are putting forward now as an instrument to prepare and more effectively address the mobility aspects of potential crisis situations in this region. Based on past and current patterns of mobility in the region, IOM is now analyzing key events and processes in the region, such as the withdrawal of the international military forces from Afghanistan and the potential impact of natural disasters. This assessment will serve as the basis for a multi-stakeholder consultation process to ensure that all the actors concerned are well placed to address the future of migration in the region in a way that would support sustainable development and growth. The Migration Crisis Operational Framework is a tool to bring IOM's expertise into a stronger partnership with you, to ensure we are collectively able to assess and build better capacity to manage migration during crisis.

This brings me to the next key point, which cuts across the four priorities I have just outlined - the need to ensure adequate protection of the human rights of all migrants and the recognition by all of us that people do not lose any of those rights when they decide to leave their country of origin.

Our collective responsibility requires paying particular attention to those made vulnerable by a myriad of circumstances and conditions, including trafficked persons, unaccompanied minors, refugees, asylum seekers, stateless persons or returning migrants to ensure that their needs are properly identified and that they are provided with appropriate support and protection.

This is a formidable list of priorities. IOM, together with a number of other international and regional organisations present here, is already directly implementing, and supporting Governments and civil society actors in implementing, a variety of activities aimed at addressing these priority issues.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Migration is a cross-border phenomenon; as such, it should be placed in a broader context of regional cooperation and regional policy development. To reinforce this, we are presently supporting some 15

regional dialogues on migration worldwide all geared towards creating broader consensus on migration management issues. The rise in inter-state cooperation and sustained dialogue we have witnessed over the past two decades in particular at the regional and, more recently, at the inter-regional and global levels, is clear evidence that governments know that isolated positions and policies are no longer an option in today's world. I heard this message loud and clear at the recent Global Meeting of the Chairs and Secretariats of the Regional Consultative Processes on Migration (RCPs), which IOM organized in Peru just a couple of weeks ago. This was the 4th such global gathering of regional groupings that IOM has organized since 2005. The Peru meeting brought together representatives of over 20 different regional cooperative mechanisms with varying degrees of formality and history, including the participation of a representative of the Government of Kazakhstan.

While supporting the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan together with our UNHCR partners in preparing the ground for the launch of the Almaty Process, IOM was able to draw on its extensive expertise on RCPs in different corners of the world. Our close engagement with and support for RCPs serves only to further strengthen our conviction of the importance of greater exchange and interaction among the different regional forums to minimise duplication and enhance outcomes for all stakeholders. That is why we find the proximity and relevance to this conference of the "neighbouring" processes -- such as the Bali Process and the Budapest Process, as well as of other key regional organisations and mechanisms which have migration on their agenda -- of particular importance.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

We are living in an increasingly interconnected and complex world, a world with more and more mobility, which brings new opportunities but also increasingly complex challenges. It raises many questions such as how to stem irregular migration, while facilitating regular movements and strengthening migration and development links? How to ensure state security, while protecting the human rights of migrants and preserving the asylum space? And what needs to be done to make sure we are ready to address all the multitude of challenges arising in the context of a migration crisis? The fact that the majority of countries in the world belong to at least one RCP and many belong to more than one is clear evidence that regional collaboration and dialogue is at least part of the answer to these questions.

The efforts that are already taking place in the region can, and must be, strengthened by our collective action and more firm resolve. We must do more and, as has been stated in the Almaty Declaration, we must work within a regional framework if we are to succeed. Here in Almaty again, we have today the opportunity to do, let's use it!

IOM is very pleased to be present at the birth of a new regional consultative process, the Almaty Process. As ever, we stand ready to provide you with the support you may need and request.

Thank you.

Concluding remarks by Ms. Laura Thompson

Deputy Director-General of the International Organization for Migration

I would like to congratulate the Chair on the skillful steering of the debate and the participating States for a rich and productive discussion and the progress achieved – reaching an agreement. The existing regional processes – 15 RCPs worldwide, meeting in Lima – and global processes – HLD on International Migration and Development, GFMD) – are clear evidence that States from around the world can come together for constructive discussions even if their perspectives on and experiences of migration differ.

Reaching an agreement with many stakeholders involved is never easy but it is well worth the effort, in fact there is no other way if we are to improve the governance of migration. Regional cooperation and partnership are fundamental to realizing the full benefits of human mobility and unlocking its development potential and to addressing its challenges. This point was reiterated in the recent Global Regional Consultative Processes on Migration (RCPs) meeting in Lima which has already been mentioned today. The discussions at that event confirmed that RCPs and inter-regional forums on migration (IRF) are critical pieces of the global institutional architecture on migration, and an important means for fostering dialogue and cooperation amongst states with common migration interests and challenges.

You have made great progress already: the adoption of the Almaty Declaration in 2011, the coordination work carried out since the previous Ministerial event, as well as the focused discussions yesterday and today, culminating in the Operating Modalities of the Almaty process and the Communique we have adopted today are a solid foundation to build on going forward.

Based on the Government priorities we have heard highlighted today and IOM's own experience, let me mention a few priority issues for the cooperation in the framework of the Almaty Process:

Provide adequate protection of the human rights of all migrants in particular those made vulnerable by a myriad of circumstances and conditions. There has to be a clear recognition that people do not lose any of those rights when they decide to leave their country of origin.

Combat irregular migration through better control and screening mechanisms, including better border systems, more secure travel documents, capacity building of border officials and relevant institutions for care and return of irregular migrants.

Linked to the above is the need to expand channels for regular migration. Well-managed, legal corridors for labor migrants are needed to ensure that they can develop their own human potential and become productive. There is also a need to channel the benefits of migration into socio-economic development strategies at the national level.

Fight trafficking in human beings, in particular labor exploitation of migrants, which is very prevalent in this region because of the high degree of irregular movement for employment purposes.

As the region is prone to natural disasters with a mix of environmental and political challenges, we also need to prepare to address the migration-related aspects of natural disasters or man-made crises. This should include dealing with causes and consequences of possible mass internal or cross-border

flows of people triggered by a crisis and assisting international migrants and displaced populations caught in these situations.

I take also note of the concerns expressed by the HC and others about the nature and scale of the mixed migration flows and about the potential for migration crises induced by natural disasters or post-2014 developments in Afghanistan. In response IOM is prepared to envelop and deploy its Migration Crisis Operational Framework that I briefly mentioned this morning, which is designed to address the multiple challenges arising from sudden or gradual onset crisis which induces mass displacement and creates diverse vulnerabilities among displaced and host population.

The Almaty Process will offer the participating States the opportunity to discuss migration matters and develop consensus on these and other migration management issues. We hope that this Process will also allow its members to find the best applicable formula to this region for reconciling the various challenges that they are facing and to design and implement creative solutions to address them.

However, we are just at the beginning of the road as far as the Almaty process is concerned. There is great potential there to be realized and IOM together with UNHCR will be there to support you.

But with the Almaty process as with any other RCP, the States are firmly in the driving seat. The extensive experience we have supporting RCPs around the globe clearly indicates that the key ingredient of their success is government ownership. We know that a self-funded support structure for the Almaty Process is key to ensuring that its priorities are set the membership rather than externally. Consequently, IOM stands ready to support you in making the Almaty process be a self-funding process that we know it has the potential to be.

Closing Remarks by Mr. António Guterres

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Mr. Chairman,

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

I would like to begin by thanking the other co-organizers of this ministerial conference: the Government of Kazakhstan, particularly Minister Idrissof and his staff and the International Organization for Migration, so eloquently represented by Deputy Director-General Laura Thompson.

I also want to extend my thanks to the participants of the Senior Officials Meeting, who prepared the final ground for today's conference.

Let me also express my appreciation to the staff of the conference facilities, especially the interpreters, and to all UNHCR and IOM staff who were involved in this process.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very happy with the results of this meeting for two reasons:

Firstly, at a time of increasing numbers of uprooted people worldwide, when the nature of displacement is becoming ever more complex, it is remarkable that countries in this region were able to come together to find a consensus on a way forward to address these issues in the future.

The adoption of the Operating Modalities for the Almaty Process signals the political will to tackle asylum and migration issues in a more comprehensive and holistic way, in a spirit of dialogue and cooperation.

This is clear recognition that unilateral response mechanisms simply cannot be effective. This consensus paves the way to finding a regional response to the needs of people on the move, which addresses both the national interests of States, and the protection needs of asylum-seekers and refugees who are increasingly part of wider mixed migration flows.

Secondly, I believe the agreement we have found here over the last two days sends a very important message to the wider international community. The countries represented here today are keenly aware of the important challenges facing them and recognize the urgent need to find more effective ways of responding to them. But they cannot do so without robust international support.

I therefore hope the international community will support the Almaty Process, to harvest the benefits of cooperation among states who share similar concerns, and in synergy with other relevant processes.

Finally, today's conference is only a first step. UNHCR – alongside IOM – will continue to be active supporters of this process. We will work with all the States around the table in order to help them in developing procedures and modalities to ensure the protection of refugees and asylum-seekers, including those who arrive in mixed migratory flows. But just as importantly, we will also be supporting the search for durable solutions. We owe it to those whose lives have been in limbo for far too long.

Rahmet

Closing Remarks by Mr. Yerlik Kenenbayev,

Vice Minister of Internal affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan

Dear Conference participants,

I am certain that this Conference has been yet another impetus for the expansion and deepening of bilateral and multilateral cooperation. It has facilitated the development of a unified, coordinated approach and of an effective mechanism of interaction in the area of migration and refugees. It is a valuable contribution to ensuring security and cooperation.

Kazakhstan is doing everything possible to support the agencies who are working towards the protection of the rights of refugees and who promote international migration. We consider very important the developing of cooperation with IOM, UNHCR and other stakeholders, UN agencies and NGOs. Such interaction must be targeted to expedite the efforts of the Government to bring legislation on migration in line with international norms and standards.

In conclusion, let me assure you that Kazakhstan is fully determined to remain in the future an active partner of IOM and UNHCR in the region and to expand its multifaceted interaction in the sphere of migration, as refugee and international migration regulation will remain priority issues in the agendas of Kazakhstan and its neighbors.

Thank you for your attention.