

Almaty Process

Introducing the Almaty Process - Theme: [slide 2]

The Almaty Process on Refugee Protection and International Migration is a State-driven, inter-Governmental process. It aims to address the multiple challenges resulting from complex migration dynamics and mixed migratory movements in Central Asia and the broader region in a cooperative and coordinated manner through promoting sustained dialogue and exchange of information on migration issues and on refugee protection challenges.

Key facts of the Almaty Process: [slide 3]

The Almaty Process was initiated in 2011 by the Government of Kazakhstan, IOM and UNHCR. The first Regional Conference on Refugee Protection and International Migration was held in Almaty in March 2011, which resulted in the unanimous adoption of the Almaty Declaration. The Almaty Process, was launched as an RCP on 5 June, 2013. It consists of 7 Member States: the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan, the Republic of Turkey and Turkmenistan. The Islamic Republic of Iran and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan are observer States. The current chair is the Republic of Kazakhstan. The Secretariat of the Almaty Process is the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) which perform the Support Unit functions.

Key Areas of [slide 4]

- **Regular dialogue among State representatives, international organizations and regional organizations have fostered trust and confidence**
- **Achieved harmonization and coordination of responses on mixed movements through capacity building**
- **Central Asian States are working together in facilitating regular migration which serve the interests of both countries of origin and destination, and contribute to overall socioeconomic development in the broader region**
- **Participating States are identifying areas where more targeted support is needed allowing for better coordination of activities.**
- **Cooperation among and between relevant authorities at national and regional level through exchange of information and good practices**
- **Legislative and institutional reforms leading to closer cooperation among the countries of the regions as well as inter-agency coordination**
- **Access to efficient tools and mechanisms (both operational and legislative) for: managing borders and ensuring security; planning for emergency preparedness; collecting, analyzing and sharing data; establishing effective identification and profiling; preventing irregular migration; enhancing legal migration channels; and protecting migrants' rights including the most vulnerable in accordance with international best practices.**

Almaty Process Key Events: [slide 5]

- **15 - 16 March 2011 – First Regional Ministerial Conference on Refugee Protection and International Migration (Almaty, Kazakhstan)**

IOM and UNHCR in cooperation with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the United Nations Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA) co-organized the Regional Conference on Refugee Protection and International Migration in Central Asia. The conference was convened under the auspices of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, with financial support provided by the European Union (EU), the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration of the U.S. Department of State, IOM and UNHCR.

The Conference brought together more than 120 participants, including Ministers, Deputy Ministers and other senior level government officials from Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Turkey.

The Almaty Declaration

The Almaty Declaration was adopted by participating states which provided the broader framework within which the conference recommendations will be implemented. The Almaty Declaration acknowledged the continued need to address the multiple challenges resulting from complex migration dynamics and mixed migratory movements in Central Asia and the wider region, in a cooperative and coordinated manner.

- **7 September 2012 – National Coordinators’ Meeting (Almaty, Kazakhstan)**

Regional Cooperation Framework and Regional Action Plan

The RCF consists of a set of Common Understandings that emerged from discussions at the Regional Conference and cover four areas where more coordinated and joint action is needed for resolving the region’s particular challenges. **(I)** Managing Borders and Ensuring Security while Ensuring Protection; **(II)** Differentiated Processes and Procedures; **(III)** Viable Solutions for Different Groups; and **(IV)** Developing Legal Migration Opportunities and Gender-Sensitive Migration Policies. The Regional Action Plan complements the Regional Cooperation Framework (RCF). It provides suggestions for concrete actions in the 4 different areas of Common Understanding outlined in the RCF to guide Central Asian Governments and other relevant stakeholders in the implementation of the RCF.

- **5 June 2013 - Ministerial Conference on Refugee Protection and International Migration: The Almaty Process (Almaty, Kazakhstan)**

The Conference resulted in the issuance of a Communiqué, the endorsement of the Operating Modalities and thereby the operationalization of the Almaty Process as a Regional Consultative Process.

Operating Modalities

The Operating Modalities set out the objectives of the Almaty Process: which are:

- 1) To promote sustained dialogue and exchange of information on migration issues and on refugee protection challenges;
- 2) To facilitate the development of mechanisms to monitor migration trends in order to forecast and to address the issues of irregular migration at regional level;
- 3) To foster a common understanding among States and other stakeholders of the causes, dimensions, patterns, and consequences of cross-border displacement, as well as trends and impacts of migration in the region;
- 4) To promote coherent, comprehensive and differentiated policies at the national and regional level for persons on the move;
- 5) To develop project-based actions aimed at enhancing State capacity to devise new forms of international and regional cooperation, with the goal of managing migration, including labor migration, and refugee protection issues.,

Communiqué

Through the communiqué, member states endorsed the Operating Modalities of the Almaty Process as a platform for dialogue and cooperation on mixed migration and international protection and reaffirmed their commitment to develop and strengthen the Almaty Process as a regional platform for development and implementation of initiatives to manage migration, while ensuring human rights and international protection.

- **21 November 2014 – First Senior Officials Meeting, Mixed Migration Movements from Afghanistan Post-2014 (Almaty, Kazakhstan)**

The meeting was organized by the Chair of the Almaty Process, the Republic of Kazakhstan with the support and participation of IOM and UNHCR.

The meeting emphasized the need that Almaty Process Member States and Central Asia countries in particular, need to identify concrete thematic areas on regional cooperation for follow up. It was emphasized that exchange of good practices and harmonization with international standards are necessary tools in all relevant areas of cooperation. In particular, participants emphasized the need to attract attention from the international community to prevent irregular migration and hold regional events among countries that face common challenges.

- **22 September 2015 – Second Senior Officials Meeting, Labour Migration Opportunities and Challenges in Central Asia, Addressing Solutions for Migrants and Refugees (Astana, Kazakhstan)**

The 2nd Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) of the Almaty Process took place in Astana, Kazakhstan on 22 September 2015. The meeting was organized by the Chair of the Almaty Process, the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Vice Minister, Birzhan Nurymbetov, Ministry of Health Care and Social Development, emphasized that the purpose of the SOM is to enhance Government's capacities for finding solutions regarding issues of labor migration and refugee's access to employment. Labor migration is a trans-national process, and therefore inter-state dialogue and cooperation is essential for managing migration and most importantly identifying successful experiences on regulating migration.

Participants of the one day meeting were National Coordinators and Senior Officials from Almaty Process **Member States:** the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan, the Republic of Turkey and Turkmenistan; **Observer States:** the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan; and **Guest States:** People's Republic of China, the Russian Federation, and the United States of America; as well as representatives from the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) in its capacity of the Secretariat of the Prague Process and the Budapest Process.

The 2nd Senior Officials Meeting has been organized within the framework of the project "Addressing Mixed Migration Flows through Capacity Building in Central Asia" funded by the US Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration, Government of the United States (PRM USA) and the Government of Kazakhstan.

The theme of the meeting was *Labour Migration Opportunities and Challenges in Central Asia, Addressing Solutions for Migrants and Refugees* and covered the following thematic areas:

The impact of labour migration on economies, societies and the environment in Central Asia and the broader region

Labour migration has had a mixed impact on the countries of origin in Central Asia and the broader region. On the one hand, it has provided a stimulus to local development and served as an instrument of balancing labour needs, addressing such issues as youth unemployment, low wages and limited job supply. However, in the long term, large-scale emigration has at times produced negative consequences, putting strain on families, local communities and larger regions. Mitigating those is being recognized as a primary task for

local authorities, employment and migration services as well as non-governmental organizations. New challenges have arisen with the fallout from the economic crisis affecting countries of destination, most notably through devaluation reducing the level of remittances and through the application of re-entry bans on irregular migrants. This may result in possible changes in the scale and direction of migrant flows as migrant workers seek alternative locations or seek to re-enter the labour markets back home.

Factors and consequences of labour migration out of and within Central Asia: key findings from IOM field assessments in Central Asia

The IOM report “Mapping of Irregular Migration in Central Asia 2014” and a field assessment on re-entry banned migrants (conducted during August 2015) were presented to the participating governments addressing the scale and characteristics of regular and irregular migratory flows, effects of Eurasian Economic Union enlargement and of imposition of re-entry bans, possibilities of re-integration of returning migrants into the local labour markets and communities, and other crisis triggers in Central Asia.

Good practices on migration governance (administrative, legislative and operational) recognizing the linkages between migration and development

If properly managed in an orderly manner, labour migration may serve the interests of all parties involved: migrant workers, countries of origin and destination, and contribute to overall socioeconomic development in the broader region. Lasting solutions are needed to address the issue of irregular employment so as to provide work security, protect migrant workers’ rights and meet the current demand for labour. Migration and development are highly interdependent processes. International migration in the development context relates both to people who have chosen to move of their own accord, and forced migrants who can ultimately end up contributing to both their country of resettlement and possibly their country of origin if it is ever safe to return. Development, meanwhile, is a dynamic process implying growth, advancement, empowerment and progress, with the goal of increasing human capabilities, enlarging the scope of human choices, and creating a safe and secure environment where citizens can live with dignity and equality. In the development process, it is important that people’s productivity, creativity and choices are broadened, and that opportunities are created. In this context, it is worth considering some legislative and administrative instruments that have been recently elaborated in the region for regularizing current foreign work and for attracting migrant workers with skills and expertise in high demand. Government participants had the opportunity to share national perspectives on the best ways to respond to issues arising in connection with migrant flows into, through and out of the region. In particular, a review of existing solutions (patents, quotas, work permit procedures) for managing foreign employment served to identify opportunities for sharing information and exchanging good practices through bilateral and regional schemes.

Regional and national perspectives on regulating migration: recent reforms and areas of need

Migration management has become an increasingly important policy area as it has been featured in national development strategies and in regional cooperation schemes, of which the Almaty Process is a recent example. Legislative and institutional reforms have in many instances led to a closer inter-agency coordination in such areas as: facilitating immigration of priority groups, regularizing seasonal and local cross-border movement, addressing trafficking in persons and tackling security threats. Regulating emigration remains a top priority in most countries of the region, calling for innovative approaches, such as maintaining ties with the diaspora, countering fraud and abuse of migrant workers’ rights and informing own nationals of the risks and opportunities related to work abroad. At the same time, elaborating a set of instruments for promoting well-managed labour immigration, which would help fill the local and national

needs, has been on the agenda of some of the states. Participating states acknowledge that proper regulation of migratory flows requires further improvement of mechanisms for collecting, processing and analyzing migration statistics.

Human development implications of labour migration and remittance flows among the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan should be at the centre of national development policies and programming, and the Sustainable Development Agenda. Providing social protection measures to improve the welfare of migrants can benefit both source and destination countries. Thus, increased cooperation on cross-border movement of people, goods and services should be further explored and promoted. Many opportunities exist to support labour migrants and their families, for example, through providing quality health and social services, and building skills of migrants through vocational education training. For example, in Kazakhstan, UNDP and the Government of Kazakhstan supported integration of oralmans (Kazakh ethnic returnees) by providing legal aid and business consultations promoting their inclusion into society by eliminating various social and economic barriers.

IOM possess extensive experience on regional consultative processes (Puebla Process, Bali Process etc), working closely with government, non-government stakeholders and other international organizations in addressing the many challenges of complex migratory movements. The good practices of the “Puebla Process” was shared with all government participants of the Almaty Process.

Solutions for refugees: labour mobility and international protection – the opportunities, challenges, international practices and the Central Asian perspective

Introduction to the nexus between refugee protection and labour mobility: how labour mobility can lead to solutions for refugees and to the economic development of the countries of destination, of asylum, and of their origin by exploring international practices and their potential application in Central Asia, was introduced by UNHCR. Refugees have enjoyed labour opportunities as an effective way to promote solutions to their problems in numerous occasions in the past. The promotion of labour opportunities and rights has been tested by governments in an effective manner since the beginning of the 20th Century. There are close countries such as Iran, and to a different degree Pakistan that have explored these solutions in an attempt to benefit both, their own labour markets and refugees themselves. There are opportunities in Central Asia that make this Region an excellent candidate for the promotion of these type of measures and become a leading model on solutions for refugees.

Migrants' rights was a cross-cutting issue particularly emphasized throughout all sessions of the event. T

The Commission on Human Rights under the President of Republic of Kazakhstan, presented the Special report on *Migrants' Rights in the Republic of Kazakhstan*, supported by IOM Development Fund, mentioning that recommendations of the report have already been implemented while a new law on the inclusion of NGOs within policy making will be passed by January 2016 by the Government of Kazakhstan.

Participating States emphasized the need of measures and revisions of current national legislation so that immigration of priority groups, such as high-skilled migrants and workers with skills in demand, can be facilitated by addressing the costs, duration and complexity of the procedures. They also highlighted the importance of providing pathways to regularization of residence and employment of selected groups of immigrants as well as concluding bilateral and multilateral agreements on protection of migrant workers' rights as well as on combating negative phenomena related to irregular migration by implementing measures through regional co-operation and coordinated actions in the fight against trafficking and exploitation as well as smuggling of migrants.

The Chair of the Almaty Process emphasized the need for increased cooperation in addressing migration challenges in Central Asia with the involvement of relevant governments and in close cooperation with IOM and UNHCR and other international stakeholders and reaffirmed the importance of the Almaty Process as a regional consultative process for further dialogue and regional cooperation on mixed migration flows in Central Asia.

Role of the Chair of the Almaty Process – Republic of Kazakhstan: [slide 6]

Successfully organized the first Regional Ministerial Conference in 2011; the National Coordinators' Meeting in 2012; the Ministerial Conference on Refugee Protection and International Migration in 2013; and the Senior Officials Meetings in 2014 and 2015 with high level participation from the Central Asian and neighboring States, as well as other stakeholders.

Played a key role in translating the recommendations of the Almaty Declaration into action through national and regional activities

Actively promote dialogue and cooperation among Almaty Process member states, observers and guest states throughout meetings and regular consultations.

IOM Regional Activities in Support to the Almaty Process: [slide 7]

Within the framework of the project "Addressing Mixed Migration Flows through Capacity Building in Central Asia", in addition to the 2nd SOM, three regional activities were organized by IOM, funded by the US Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration, Government of the United States (PRM USA) which aims to build the capacity of Central Asian States to manage mixed migration flows, ensure protection of human rights of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers through strengthening regional cooperation and dialogue.

- **30 March - 1 April 2015 - Regional Training on "Migration Management and Capacity Building on Irregular Migration" (Almaty, Kazakhstan)**

From March 30 to April 1 2015, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) Sub regional office for Central Asia conducted a regional training on "Migration Management and Capacity Building on Irregular Migration" in Almaty, Kazakhstan, in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

Participating in the regional training were sixty (60) border and immigration officials from the governments of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan. The trainings modules were designed and presented by IOM experts/trainers. The objectives of the training were to: i/ bring together representatives of relevant migration related government agencies from the Central Asian countries with international experts in order to exchange good practices on migration management and discuss challenges regarding irregular migration; ii/ present border and immigration officials with the latest tools to assess risks and improve migration management; iii/ identify needs for countering irregular migration on national and regional levels; and vi/ find ways in which the international community inter-alia with CA governments can best facilitate and provide assistance.

The participants went through team exercises to identify challenges. Many common themes emerged during the discussions, such as national security threats (terrorism, extremism, radicalization), brain drain and demographic challenges, availability and sharing of statistics, need in highly qualified labour force (Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan), need to create jobs and keep qualified work force (Uzbekistan, Tajikistan), maintain connection with diasporas (Uzbekistan), need to address circular migration (Tajikistan), economic aspects of migration (remittances), interagency and intra-agency cooperation, measures to facilitate local border movements (Turkmenistan), visa facilitation and registration requirements, protection of the labour force and demography (Kazakhstan). Participants were exposed to migration policy, migration management and principles of international migration law in particular regarding migrants' social, economic and labour rights.

The importance of interagency and intra-agency collaboration among different institutions related to implementation of necessary reforms was highlighted for controlling irregular migration.

- **17 - 18 June 2015 - Regional Forum on International Cooperation in the area of Migration and Emergency Preparedness (Ashgabat, Turkmenistan)**

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) sub regional office for Central Asia in cooperation with the Government of Turkmenistan organized a Regional Forum on “International Cooperation in the area of Migration and Emergency Preparedness” with high level participants from Central Asian countries and Afghanistan. Forty government officials from Central Asian countries and Afghanistan shared good practices in Disaster Risk Reduction and Emergency Preparedness under IOM’s Migration Crisis Operational Framework (MCOF). It also addressed key recommendations on how the humanitarian system must evolve to better tackle challenges of today.

The objective of the regional forum was to familiarise Governments of the region with the IOM’s Migration Crisis Operation Framework (MCOF) as well as on international good practices in disaster risk reduction and emergency preparedness and to create a regional network of focal points for further coordinated efforts to potential man-made or natural disasters in the region. The participants of the forum have acknowledged the importance of IOM Migration Crisis Operational Framework (MCOF) recognizing the critical importance of ensuring that emergency/border authorities as well as other relevant authorities, in close cooperation with international organizations and other international counterparts, are prepared to respond appropriately to cross-border movements arising from natural or man-made disasters fully guaranteeing the rights of vulnerable groups, placing particular emphasis on humanitarian aspects of migration crises. The participants of the regional event shared a common vision that the regional forum is regarded as a preparatory event for conducting regional consultations ahead of the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) to be held in Istanbul, 26-27 May 2016. IOM confirmed its commitment to work closely with its member states in addressing issues of interest and concern in the framework of the upcoming World Humanitarian Summit which aims to set the agenda for a more inclusive and diverse humanitarian system in order to make humanitarian action more effective, exploring further the synergies between humanitarian assistance and development assistance and how the rapprochement of those two areas can benefit countries and societies. The regional event was hosted and co-funded by the Government of Turkmenistan within the framework of the 20th anniversary of the status of neutrality and on the adoption of the UN General Assembly Resolution on “Permanent neutrality of Turkmenistan”.

The meeting was organized by IOM in cooperation with the Government of Turkmenistan and **14 – 15 September 2015 - Regional Training on Disaster Risk Reduction, Emergency Response and IOM’s Migration Crisis Operational Framework (Almaty, Kazakhstan)**

The regional training on Disaster Risk Reduction, Emergency Response and IOM’s Migration Crisis Operational Framework (MCOF) took place in Almaty, Kazakhstan on 14 and 15 September 2015. The regional training was organized by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Sub-regional Office for Central Asia in the Republic of Kazakhstan in cooperation with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Committee of Emergencies, of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Participants of the two-day regional training were Government officials from agencies involved in emergency preparedness from: the Republic of Kazakhstan; the Kyrgyz Republic; the Republic of Tajikistan; the Republic of Uzbekistan; and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan; as well as representatives from international organizations, donor community and private sector: the International Organization for Migration (IOM); the Embassy of Finland to the Republic of Kazakhstan; the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department (ECHO); the UK Department for International Development (DFID); the United Nations

Development Programme (UNDP); the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA); the United States Agency for International Development (OFDA/USAID), and Kaznex Invest . Participants were exposed to information on how to build tools and mechanisms for preventing and responding to a migration crisis. Participants had the opportunity to acquire information on the IOM Migration Crisis Operational Framework (MCOF) and how to utilize it as a practical, operational and institution-wide tool to improve and systematize the way in which IOM supports its Member States and partners to better prepare for and respond to migration crises. Participants were actively engaged into discussions and developed possible scenarios of migration crisis. In addition, participating Government officials shared experiences and good practices on mitigation and recovery and through several case studies learnt about IOM's activities to prevent and mitigate natural disasters, floods and earthquakes through international emergency preparedness and response mechanisms.