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SOCIAL PROTECTION OF THE POPULATION OF THE REPUBLIC
OF KAZAKHSTAN, AT PART II OF THE 17th MEETING OF THE
OSCE ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM**

Athens, 18 to 20 May 2009

**“Migration management and its linkages with economic, social and
environmental policies to the benefit of stability and security in the
OSCE region”**

**Session II: Review of the implementation of OSCE commitments in the economic and
environmental dimension focusing on migration**

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Forum participants,
Ladies and gentlemen,

1. Introduction

On behalf of Kazakhstan, I should like to express my sincere gratitude and thank you for the opportunity to speak at this Forum.

Involvement in the discussion of one of the most pressing problems in the world, namely the diverse and difficult issue of migration, is further evidence of Kazakhstan's commitment as a young sovereign State to generally accepted democratic values and principles.

We should like to take this opportunity to study and make practical use of international experience in migration management in the interests of protecting the rights of migrants and developing their potential, promoting economic growth and ensuring the sustainable development of the country, expanding international contacts, developing co-operation and strengthening security in Europe and the international community as a whole.

These issues are acquiring particular importance in view of the fact that the Republic of Kazakhstan has been selected to chair the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe in 2010. This is not only a great honour and an acknowledgement of our achievements, but also a great responsibility for meeting all international commitments

unconditionally and for participating in the efforts to resolve the world's problems in this era of globalization.

2. Assessment of the review report

The review report by Mr. Ibrahim Awad on progress made and the readiness to confront the challenges posed by migration today is exhaustive and informative.

I should like to take this opportunity to mention the significant contribution made by the OSCE to the development of dialogue and co-operation among the participating States and the assistance provided to them in devising migration policies.

I am convinced of the practical importance of the report's principal recommendations for formulating and implementing migration policy:

- Implementation of the relevant international standards in national legislation;
- Active countering of xenophobia and discrimination against migrants;
- Increasing the mobility of the labour force;
- Expanding social security coverage for migrant workers.

3. The migration situation in the Republic of Kazakhstan

In its statements delivered at previous OSCE meetings, Kazakhstan has had an opportunity to outline the basic goals, principles and tasks of our country's migration policy. Its potential is in many respects linked to the practical application of OSCE approaches to resolving migration problems, taking into account the current situation and the specific national features.

Since Kazakhstan has remained a focal point for migration flows owing to its internal stability and fairly stable economic situation even in the current financial crisis, the country systematically combines liberalization of the migration regime with the protection of the interests of citizens of Kazakhstan and the rights and freedoms of migrants. Migration flows are increasing, and over the last few years the number of migrants has remained high.

The Republic is one of the few countries that pursues an ethnic migration policy. More than 737,000 ethnic Kazakhs have returned to their historical homeland since the country gained its independence.

Kazakhstan uses foreign labour migration to satisfy the demands of innovative development and to attract a highly qualified workforce. Over the last five years, the foreign workforce in Kazakhstan has more than tripled as a result of the implementation of major investment projects and on account of the shortage of qualified personnel within the domestic labour market.

The Republic of Kazakhstan, having acceded to the United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its Protocol, is consistently meeting its international commitments with respect to refugees. Around 600 persons who have fled from Afghanistan,

Somalia and Ethiopia currently have refugee status in Kazakhstan. A law on refugees containing additional commitments to accept, support and provide social protection for refugees and persons seeking asylum in Kazakhstan is being prepared for adoption.

In accordance with the norms of international law and with multilateral and bilateral relations, measures are being taken to prevent and suppress illegal migration, violence against migrants regardless of their status, and trafficking in human beings.

At the same time, as is the case for many other countries, the following issues are a source of serious concern:

- Migration losses;
- The relatively low success rate in attracting and utilizing foreign labour;
- An insufficiently developed infrastructure in this area and the resolution of issues concerning the integration of migrants;
- The persistence of illegal migration, which threatens social stability;
- The need for further improvement of the institutional migration management mechanism.

4. Ameliorating the influence of the financial and economic crisis on the employment, social protection and integration of migrants

These and other problems are becoming particularly serious in the current financial and economic crisis.

The report's recommendations on ameliorating the impact of the global financial and employment crisis on migrants and preserving economic, social and political stability both in the host countries and in the countries of origin are of great value.

- (a) The anti-crisis measures being taken in our country have not cancelled out the long-term policy of ensuring the protection and integration of migrants and managing migration flows.

With the active support and technical assistance of the OSCE and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), work is concluding on a new law on migration. Its provisions and norms are being brought into line with the generally accepted global standards and Kazakhstan's international commitments. The draft law:

- Identifies the parameters for the government's management of all kinds of migration;
- Pays considerable attention to the balance between the interests of the migrants and those of the host society, and the protection of the rights and freedoms of migrants, including the possibility of reuniting families;
- Encourages ethnic migration;

- Streamlines internal migration processes, etc.
- (b) Despite the current difficulties and deteriorating situation in the labour market:
 - The quotas set earlier to attract foreign labour and ethnic migrants remain in force and are being met; seasonal migrants are recruited in accordance with multilateral and bilateral commitments;
 - Measures are being taken at the State and regional level to prevent mass redundancies and to save jobs, including jobs for migrants. Amendments and additions have been made to the laws in force on employment, social protection and social insurance.

A list of more than 4,700 projects carried out under the Employment Strategy has been identified. In all investment areas of this State Employment Strategy, financing to the tune of 163.3 billion tenge (more than 1.8 billion United States dollars) is provided, which will help to create more than 254,000 jobs.

- (c) Implementation has begun of the special programme (Nurly Kosh), which provides for efficient resettlement and integration assistance to ethnic migrants, former citizens of Kazakhstan of different nationalities and internal migrants in the interests of the demographic and socio-economic development of various regions and the realization of the migrants' potential.

5. Possible areas for the development of co-operation between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the OSCE in migration management.

In achieving our national priorities in terms of migration policy, we are interested in further developing international co-operation within the OSCE.

We believe that the most relevant areas of this work to be:

- Technical assistance in drawing up and improving national legislation, including laws concerned with internal migration management;
- The conducting of surveys and research to see whether the laws in force are in keeping with the migration situation and its associated challenges;
- Consideration of the possibilities and preparation of recommendations on the harmonization of the national laws of the OSCE participating States;
- Collation of international experience in the institutional organization of migration management.

I should like to conclude my statement by wishing the participants in this Forum continued fruitful discussions so that we might reach an understanding and agreement regarding further aspects of the work on managing and using migration for development both at the national level and within the OSCE.

Thank you for your attention.