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REFUGEES, FORCIBLY DISPLACED PERSONS AND MIGRATION
AND FOR CO-OPERATION WITH INTERNATIONAL
HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATIONS OF THE CABINET OF
MINISTERS OF THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN,
AT SESSION V OF THE THIRTEENTH MEETING
OF THE OSCE ECONOMIC FORUM**

Prague, 23–27 May 2005

Mr. Chairman,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I wish to thank the keynote speakers for the extensive information and interesting material provided.

I should like to inform you briefly of the work done in Azerbaijan in the areas under discussion.

The present subject is very relevant for Azerbaijan: as you are aware, as a result of the armed conflict with Armenia more than a million inhabitants of Azerbaijan, or one eighth of the population, are refugees or forcibly displaced persons.

At the same time, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has registered 11,000 persons in Azerbaijan wishing to be granted the status of refugees. The overwhelming majority of these are citizens of Russia of Chechen extraction, and there are also citizens of Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq and Palestine.

Azerbaijan acceded in 1992 to the 1951 United Nations Convention and its 1967 Protocol, in 1998 to the Convention on the Protection of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and in the year 2003 to the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the two related protocols (Palermo).

The rights of foreign nationals and persons without citizenship who wish to receive the status of refugees are recognized, first and foremost, in the Constitution of the Azerbaijani Republic, and are protected on the basis of national legislation and of the conventions mentioned above.

In this connection, 21 laws have been adopted in the last years. A decision of the Cabinet of Ministers has approved the “State Migration Management Policy Concept” developed jointly with the International Organization for Migration. A draft “State Migration Programme” is being considered at the present time.

In the year 2000, a Decree of the President “On the Procedure for the Examination of Applications for Refugee Status” was adopted, and in 2003 regulations “On Places of Residence Specially Assigned to Persons Who Have Been Granted the Status of Refugee or Internally Displaced Person (Person Displaced within the Country) until They Obtain Work or a Place of Residence” and “On the Use of Temporary Places of Residence Made Available to Persons Who Have Submitted Requests for Refugee Status Pending the Granting of Refugee Status” were approved by decisions of the Cabinet of Ministers.

To permit the effective solution of all problems and the management of these processes from a single centre within the structure of the Cabinet of Ministers, the post of Deputy Prime Minister was established, and also of Chairman of the State Committee on Matters Relating to Refugees and Forcibly Displaced Persons, and the Department for Problems of Refugees, Forcibly Displaced Persons and Migration was created.

In 1998 and in 2004, “State Programmes on Problems of Refugees and Forcibly Displaced Persons” were adopted.

In co-operation with UNHCR, a Department on the Determination of Refugee Status has been set up, and in the last two years 50 persons have been granted refugee status. Steps have been taken to ensure the provision of free medical services to persons wishing to be granted refugee status, and education for school-age children of such persons.

The necessary facilities have been created for migrants in transit and for persons wishing to return to their countries of origin.

Mr. Chairman,

To improve co-ordination and the management of migration processes within the OSCE area, we believe that it would be desirable:

- To increase support by the OSCE and other international organizations for the expansion of the capacities of States in this field;
- To attract donors for the implementation of measures contemplated in State migration programmes;
- To consider the question of participation by the OSCE and other international organizations in processes for improving national laws and in the drawing up of State migration programmes.

Thank you for your attention.