

3rd Almaty Process Senior Officials Meeting (SOM)
Addressing Mixed Migration Flows in Central Asia: Human
mobility, Rights of Vulnerable Migrants and Refugees and Regional
Cooperation
September 19 & 20 2016, Astana, Kazakhstan

CONCLUDING REMARKS

1. The topic of the Third SOM of the Almaty Process was “**Addressing Mixed Migration Flows in Central Asia: Human Mobility, Rights of Vulnerable Migrants and Refugees and Regional Cooperation**” and the purpose of the meeting was to strengthen the capacity of the Participating States for addressing the complex challenges related to migration dynamics in Central Asia, and the broader region, through sharing good practices, analysing emerging trends, identifying gaps and providing recommendations and practical solutions. The meeting also explored opportunities as a solution for refugees in Central Asia discussing opportunities, challenges and international good practices that can ensure refugees’ rights . The meeting took stock of the progress and agreed on the next steps in the Almaty Process under the Chairmanship of the Kyrgyz Republic.
2. The Meeting was attended by the National Coordinators and Senior Officials of Member and Observer States, including the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Republic of Azerbaijan, People’s Republic of China, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Republic of Tajikistan, the Republic of Turkey and Turkmenistan, as well as representatives from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), UN agencies and other international stakeholders.
3. Participants reaffirmed their commitment to ensuring protection and providing assistance for asylum-seekers and refugees, as well as the rights of all migrants regardless of their status, including vulnerable individuals. In these times of unprecedented forced movements of persons, participating States expressed their conviction that appropriate management of population movements involves not only the humanitarian perspective and abiding with international law, but also the need to take into account the long term sustainability and development perspectives from the onset of the situation.
4. Participants recalled that the Almaty Process has been at the core of inter-state dialogue of the Region when responding the challenges on refugee protection and international migration since the adoption of the Almaty Declaration in 2011 and the operationalization of the Almaty Process as a Regional Consultative Process in 2013.
5. Participants noted the difficulty of addressing mixed migration movements when people with different motives move along the same paths, forced migrants,

economic migrants, stranded migrants, vulnerable migrants, particularly trafficked persons, unaccompanied and separated children, stateless persons, undocumented migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. While the range of vulnerabilities we see in mixed flows is vast, only a few specific categories are afforded protection, notably refugees and those migrants identified as “trafficked”. But the reality is that there are blurred lines between voluntary and forced migration, between “refugees” and “economic migrants”. Similarly, there is no clear-cut line that separates a trafficked person from many exploited or abused migrants. The challenge is particularly great when this movement is irregular and when it takes place in an emergency setting.

6. The Participating States reaffirmed the need to address the root causes of migrant vulnerabilities through continued improvement of national legal instruments in conformity with the relevant international conventions and enhanced regional cooperation with the aim of ensuring adequate protection to all vulnerable categories of migrants.
7. Participating States recognized the need to address migrant workers’ rights through managing recruitment activities and improving compliance by employers with the rules for foreign work. Participating States recognized that ensuring the rights of migrant workers are respected is key to maximizing economies’ benefits of labour migration for both sending and receiving countries.
8. Participants highlighted the importance of providing pathways to regularization of residence and employment of selected groups of immigrants and protracted refugee caseloads as well as concluding bilateral and multilateral agreements on protection of migrant workers’ rights as well as on preventing and combating negative phenomena related to irregular migration.
9. Participants reaffirmed their commitment to implement measures through regional co-operation and coordinated actions in the fight against trafficking and exploitation as well as smuggling of migrants. They reaffirmed the commitment of the States to ensuring safe environment for labour migration, respecting migrant workers’ rights, raising migrants’ awareness through information campaigns for preventing trafficking in human beings. Importance of involving diaspora communities and non-governmental organizations was reasserted.
10. Taking into account the best international practices participants agreed to advance their work accordingly and as much as possible so as to enhance their activities in improving domestic legislation and procedures on identification, apprehension, transportation, detention and expulsion/return of third-country irregular migrants, taking into account as well the needs of most vulnerable groups .
11. Participants acknowledged the vital contribution of migration to economic development. In particular, they stressed the importance of the effect remittances have upon countries’ economies that experience high rates of emigration while noting that actions for facilitating the transfer of remittances through banking assistance and utilizing it for developmental goals such as investing to education and public health need to be taken through closer cooperation between states.
12. Participants recognized the relevance of having a set of “Regional Guidelines on how to identify and refer asylum seekers and refugees at the borders of Central Asia” that contain recommendations adapted to the Central Asian region on how to identify and refer asylum seekers at the borders. The Senior Officials of the

represented States commended the initiative and recommended that that these guidelines are referred to as a guide when individual countries elaborate legal or policy document on how to manage forced migration flows into their countries.

13. Participants would like to recall the importance of achieving self-reliance and solutions for refugees in Central Asia. Participants recognized that there is room for further exploration and potential in Central Asia to use relevant policies, including migration policy and alternative stay arrangements for protracted refugee caseloads, as an effective way to achieve solutions for refugees in the Region.
14. Participants agreed to advance their work as much as possible and enhance their emergency preparedness so as to enable a more effective operational response to forced displacement and to address mixed migration flows in emergencies, and welcomed the support of UNHCR and IOM.
15. Participants 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. They welcomed the opportunity for exchanging experience in legislative reforms as well as in migration management best practices.