

Statement by

**H.E. Mr. Kairat Umarov, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan
at the Intergovernmental Event at the ministerial level on the occasion of the 60th anniversary
of the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees and of the 50th anniversary of the 1961
Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness**

(7-8 December 2011, Geneva) PM

*Distinguished Mr. President,
Distinguished Mr. High Commissioner,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

To begin with I would like in behalf of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan to express my sincere appreciation to Mr. Antonio Guterres, High Commissioner for Refugees of the United Nations for the invitation to take part in the annual ministerial meeting of the United Nations Member States and congratulate each and every one of you on the memorable dates: the 60th anniversary of the Convention related to the Status of Refugees and on the 50th anniversary of the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

Protection of refugees is a global problem of the contemporary world. According to the report of the UNHCR there were more than 40 million people at the end of 2010 who had been forcibly displaced due to conflicts and persecution. That was the highest number of displaced persons in the last 15 years. In the same 2010 the world registered the lowest in the last two decades number of refugees who voluntarily returned home.

Those figures clearly indicate that the world has changed dramatically. We are confronted with a problem of mass exodus of population and with illegal migration.

The realities of today require from us new approaches to the issues of how to manage migration flows and how protect the people in need. Those issues are today closely connected to the problems of national security and national stability that in their turn is of direct relevance to the young states of Central Asia.

The volumes of migration flows in Central Asia, the challenges of human trafficking, of refugees, of drug trade and the threats of terrorism demand that we enhance measures aimed at controlling migration and prioritize then in the agendas of our countries.

Kazakhstan being both a country of origin and transit has a long history of active cooperation with the UNHCR both on national and regional levels. That cooperation has acquired new dynamics in recent years which originated in a rather complex geopolitical situation that had come into being in the region and in the world. We are very grateful to the UNHCR for constructive cooperation.

In the years since independence over 15 thousand refugees found shelter and protection. The new Law "On refugees" based on the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees was adopted in 2010.

This year saw the establishment and first steps of the Joint Working Group on asylum and protection of refugees. Its mandate includes providing supplemental training to the Migration Police Officers in order to raise their professional levels, rendering assistance to the work directed toward setting up an electronic data base containing information about refugees and asylum seekers.

In this regard we value highly the offer of the UNHCR to help us in establishing such a database.

Parallel to growing importance of the legal labor migration another challenge is assuming new dimensions: it is illegal forms of migration and abuses in the status of refugee that require strong actions.

In respect of that challenge we are very pleased with the current level of cooperation between us and UNHCR that helps us elaborate and implement a series of preventing actions aimed at deterring all attempts to use the refugee status for the purpose of committing crimes.

Unfortunately, no less intensive remains also the struggle against human traffickers.

Kazakhstan is combating rigorously trafficking in people. An Interagency Commission for the prevention of illegal export, import and trade of people has been established under the auspices of the Government of Kazakhstan. A new Plan of Actions for 2012-2014 to prevent and combat human trafficking has been introduced by the government. The country is expanding its cooperation with the countries of "near and far abroad", steps are being taken to broaden the legal foundation of cooperation with them both on bilateral and regional levels.

The adoption last year of the Global Olan of Action to combat trafficking in human beings by the United Nations General Assembly has become an important step in the development of international cooperation and a signal to the determination of the United Nations to put an end to the modern form of slavery.

We are convinced that only coordinated efforts of the entire world community can lead to complete elimination of that evil.

The Republic of Kazakhstan is actively seeking ways to resolve problems of stateless persons. Under the national laws foreigners and stateless people enjoy certain rights and freedoms including the right to right to free medical care, right to education and others.

In the last 10 years the country has succeeded in halving the number of stateless persons who had come from countries of the "far abroad". (In 2001, there were 922 such people). Today, thanks to implemented measures we are witnessing a tendency toward a reduction in the numbers of stateless persons.

Mr. President,

Problems of migration are soluble and the key to success lies in the development of an open dialogue, in the strengthening of cooperation and of coordination on bilateral, regional and global levels.

In that context it is essential to develop cooperation among the states of the region within the framework of already existing integration entities like CIS, EurAsEc, CSTO, SCO, CICA.

Within the context of the regional cooperation it is worth noting the successful organization of a Regional Conference on Protection of Refugees and on International Migration that was held in Almaty on 15-16 March, 2011, in close collaboration with UNHCR and IOM.

The Conference adopted Declaration that envisaged the creation of a Regional Framework Structure uniting under its umbrella all stake-holders: Governments, international organizations and NGOs.

In this regard, as a practical follow-up to the agreements achieved at the Conference we propose to convene a meeting in Astana on the level of diplomatic missions representing the states of the region in order to discuss further steps in establishing the Framework Structure.

We hope that UNHCR could play a role of a mediator and coordinator of necessary efforts using its extensive experience and its potential.

According to expert estimates the problems of refugees will lose their intensity in the foreseeable future and will continue to remain on the United Nations' and its Member-States' agenda as one of the most pressing issues.

Thus, we need to see further strengthening of the humanitarian role of the UNHCR in the region and further expanding of its cooperation governments in every direction. Kazakhstan is firmly committed to its obligations under the Convention on the Status of Refugees, it will remain an active partner of the UNHCR in the region and will expand cooperation in order to improve the situation of refugees and of stateless persons.

Thank you for your attention.