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Advocacy Forum on Facilitating Migration Management in North and Central Asia

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Almaty, Kazakhstan

REPORT ON THE ADVOCACY FORUM ON FACILITATING MIGRATION MANAGEMENT IN NORTH AND CENTRAL ASIA

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Annex: List of Participants

I. ORGANIZATION

A. Background

1. The Advocacy Forum on Facilitating Migration Management in North and Central Asia was organized by ESCAP in the context of a project on “Facilitating Migration Management in North and Central Asia”. It was held in Almaty, Kazakhstan on 28 and 29 June 2016.

B. Objective of the Regional Consultation

2. The objectives of the Regional Consultation were:

(a) to enhance the understanding among policymakers in North and Central Asia of policy options to enhance the effectiveness of migration management in North and Central Asia; and

(b) to identify priority areas for action to achieve the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals related to international migration.

C. Attendance

3. The Regional Consultation was attended by experts from the North and Central Asian subregion, including experts from Governments, international organizations and academia. The list of participants is annexed to this document as Annex-I.

II. OVERVIEW OF THE ADVOCACY FORUM ON FACILITATING MIGRATION MANAGEMENT IN NORTH AND CENTRAL ASIA

D. Opening of the Advocacy Forum

4. Opening remarks were delivered by Ms. Tiziana Bonapace, Head, ESCAP Subregional Office for North and Central Asia; Mr. Norimasa Shinomura, United Nations Resident Coordinator and United Nations Development Programme Resident Representative, Kazakhstan; and Mr. Dudar Zhakenov, Representative Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

5. Mr. Srinivas Tata, Chief, Social Policy and Population Section, Social Development Division, ESCAP, briefly outlined the background, main objectives and the programme of the Advocacy Forum.

III. PROCEEDINGS OF THE ADVOCACY FORUM

E. Migration and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in North and Central Asia

6. The session was moderated by Ms. Tiziana Bonapace, Head, ESCAP Subregional Office for North and Central Asia

7. Mr. Paul Tacon, Social Affairs Officer, ESCAP, delivered a presentation entitled “Migrants’ contributions to development in North and Central Asia”. In this presentation, he showed that migration was a major factor for development for both countries of origin and destination in the North and Central Asia subregion. Mr. Tacon noted that migration within the subregion, especially temporary labour migration, was a significant phenomenon, with important impacts for both countries of origin and destination, which could be a strategic benefit for sustainable development and regional integration processes.

8. Mr. Tacon used evidence from using the Asia-Pacific Migration Report 2015: Migrants’ Contributions to Development to show how migrants contributed to development in countries of destination, increasing GDP and helping upgrade employment prospects for national workers, as well as countries of origin through their remittances, skills and networks. He further noted that the outcome of migration for development was dependent on such migration being well-managed, with migrants who are able to take up decent work through fair recruitment processes and who are able to access social protection schemes being most able to contribute to development. He further noted the important role of civil society and transnational communities in supporting migrants, and stressed that United Nations frameworks support positive outcomes of migration as well as the need for regional cooperation and dialogue, bilateral partnership and national strategies to manage international migration.

9. Mr. Samat Aliev, Acting Director, Labour Migration Department, Eurasian Economic Commission, delivered a presentation on the vision and strategy of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) with regards to labour migration. He noted that the objective of the Eurasian Economic Union since its entry into force in 2015 had been to develop agreements which reduce barriers between countries to create a single market, including with regards to labour. He explained that Section XXXVI of the Treaty on Eurasian Economic Union establishes a single labour market through creating possibilities for citizens of member States to access regular employment, removing employment quotas and including migrants from member States in social protection schemes.

10. Mr. Aliev briefed participants on progress to date with regards to labour migration, noting that different data sources showed different trends with regards to migration between member States of the EAEU. He noted that from a policy perspective, access to social protection, with the exception of pensions, had been equalized, as had taxes, while procedures were in place to ensure the recognition of educational qualifications. He outlined the role of different advisory committees in further implementation of the integration project, and highlighted initiatives to inform workers from member States about their rights. He also informed participants regarding a draft treaty on pensions for workers was being finalized.

11. Subsequent discussions among participants focused on the sources of data in the subregion and their differing challenges and opportunities; the reforms of migration agencies taking place in different countries of the subregion and the need for interagency coordination within countries; the importance of return migration as a factor for development; the future expansion of the EAEU and its relationships with partners outside the subregion; the complexities of the different pension systems in the subregion; and the social issues faced by partners of migrants left behind, and sometimes facing divorce or abandonment.

F. The role of labour migration in the development of North and Central Asia, with focus on the Russian Federation

12. The session was moderated by Mr. Vladimir Mukomel, Head of Department, Institute of Sociology, Russian Academy of Science, Russian Federation.

13. Mr. Sergey Ryazantsev gave a presentation on the contribution of migrant workers to the economy of the Russian Federation. In this presentation he highlighted that the contribution of migrant workers varied by region. Most migrants were concentrated in Moscow and St. Petersburg, especially those from Central Asia. There were also a number of Chinese migrant workers who primarily in the Russian Far East. He pointed out that the recent changes in processes to obtain patents as well as the economic situation in the Russian Federation had a negative impact on migrant workers. There had been a number of migrants from China undertaking entrepreneurial activities, who had left as a result of the economic crisis.

14. Mr. Ryazantsev pointed out that while seeking to quantify the contribution of migrant workers to the economy of the Russian Federation, data was a key issue, particularly after the website of the Federal Migration Service of the Russian Federation had been closed down. He emphasized that migrant workers contributed to the economy through a number of channels: Firstly, through paying significant amounts to obtain patents, which can be considered as Government revenue. Secondly, through their work and in some cases entrepreneurial activities, and thirdly, through their consumption, as not all of their earnings are remitted. The proportion being consumed in the Russian Federation increases when migrants stay in the Russian Federation for longer periods and even take up Russian citizenship. To enhance the contribution of migrant workers to the economy of countries of destination, he recommended that regularly and orderly migration be promoted to allow migrants to take up regular jobs. He also recommended facilitating long-term migration and encourage long-term integration of migrants.

15. Mr. Vladimir Mylnikov, Ministry of Labour, Russian Federation explained that the Government of the Russian Federation expected several changes to the migration permit system as a result of the Treaty of the Eurasian Economic Union. Citizens of EAEU member countries do not require a work permit any longer and they are not subject to any quota. The Russian Federation had already made amendments to the labour code reflecting these changes. The Government of the Russian Federation had also decided to open a new web portal which facilitates job search for EAEU citizens. In 2014, more than 1 million patents were issued to migrant workers, but it was expected that this number will decline, as they will be no longer necessary for EAEU citizens. He also pointed out that the Government of the Russian Federation was working on improving access to healthcare for migrant workers.

16. Subsequent discussions focused the policy of patents. Some participants pointed out that as a result of the EAEU, obtaining a patent had become even more difficult for countries who are not members of the EAEU. The discussion also focused on the scale, nature and drivers of irregular migration. Some participants also expressed the view that migrants should not be charged to obtain patents, as the patent still does not guarantee them employment; it was pointed out that cost of obtaining patents and relatively complicated procedures often made migrants take up employment through irregular channels. The need to forecast labour market needs and skill development in countries of origin was emphasized. Some also expressed the view that the economic crisis had two effects on

migration, firstly, many migrants returned home, secondly, Russians were willing to work in jobs and sectors they were less interested in before the crisis.

G. Migration and skills in North and Central Asia

17. The session was moderated by Ms. Irina Ivakhnyuk, Deputy-Director of the Department of Population, Lomonosov Moscow State University.

18. Ms. Dmitry Poletaev, Director, Regional Public Organization “Migration Research Center”, Russian Federation, delivered a presentation on “Migration and Skills in North and Central Asia”. Mr Poletaev noted that migration in North and Central Asia was driven by demographic, economic and other issues, and represented a structural trend. He noted that migrants tended to be concentrated in “blue-collar” occupations with low or purely vocational skill requirements due to the popularity of tertiary education in countries of destination. Despite the potential for countries of origin to fill these roles, however, he noted that technical and vocational education was experiencing a decline in countries of origin, as students in these countries also opted for tertiary education, while the curricula of these institutions suffered from limited investments, and faced challenges in upgrading curricula and ensuring their recognition in countries of destination. He further noted the lack of institutions in countries of destination to plan effectively for labour migration, including required skills, and the limited role of recruitment agencies in recruiting migrants.

19. Mr. Poletaev also highlighted positive examples of international cooperation on skills within the subregion, noting the existence of initiatives which supported the upgrading of migrants’ technical and linguistic skills in the Russian Federation, and suggested that more such initiatives could be considered and supported to ensure the maximum development and efficient use of migrants’ skills.

20. The subsequent discussion focused on: the recognition of qualifications; the labour market incentives in countries of origin guiding peoples’ educational choices; the roles and responsibilities of countries of origin, destination and migrants themselves with regard to skills upgrading; the issue of “brain waste”, whereby migrants with higher education take jobs for which they are overqualified; the need to adopt a whole-of-Government approach to skills upgrading, addressing it holistically; the role of public-private partnerships in delivering technical and vocational education and training; and the importance of support small and medium enterprise development, especially among women, through easy access to finance.

H. Migration data needs and availability in North and Central Asia

21. The session was moderated by Mr. Dejan Keserovic, Coordinator for Central Asia Chief of Mission in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, International Organization for Migration (IOM)

22. Ms. Olga Chudinovskikh, Head of Section, Centre for Population Studies, Faculty of Economics, Moscow State Lomonosov University, Russian Federation, delivered a presentation on “Migration data needs and availability in North and Central Asia”. Ms. Chudinovskikh provided an overview of the different sources of migration data in the region, including censuses, specialized surveys, administrative and border statistics, outline the relative advantages and weaknesses of each source, as well as the state of availability, completeness and reliability of these sources in the subregion.

23. Ms. Chudinovskikh noted that censuses were quite well-developed, providing strong insights into migrant stocks in the subregion. However, she noted that while countries of origin showed strong practice with regards to survey data, countries of destination were making more effective use of administrative sources. She also noted the challenges posed by reforms to migration agencies in ensuring the regular collection and reporting of migration data in an accessible manner, and the reporting of migrants from EAEU member States who were no longer required to register.

24. Mr. Sherikbai Orozbaev, Leading Specialist, State Migration Service, Kyrgyzstan, acted as a discussant for the session. He noted that migration flows towards the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan from Kyrgyzstan were strong, as were remittance flows. He noted the importance of the EAEU in facilitating migration from Kyrgyzstan, as well as persisting challenges such as re-entry bans faced by migrant workers accused of irregularities. He noted the existence of specialized information and consultation centres to inform migrant workers of the existence of legal work opportunities and to promote safe and legal migration. He also highlighted the important role of pre-departure orientation in ensuring that migrants were aware of their rights and obligations in countries of destination.

25. The subsequent discussions focused on the potential uses of migration cards for producing migration data, and the challenges preventing this at the current stage; the challenges posed by reforms of migration agencies in enabling access to data for researchers; the methodologies available for estimating numbers of irregular migrants, such as residual methods and estimates of “missing” migrants based on survey data; and the importance of emphasizing the irregular, rather than “illegal” nature of some migration, especially in a context where most border crossings occurred legally.

I. Laws and institutional frameworks governing international migration in North and Central Asia

26. The session was moderated by Ms. Leila Delovarova, Deputy Dean on Scientific-Innovative Affairs and International Cooperation, Al-Farabi Kazakh National University.

27. Ms. Vanessa Steinmayer, Population Affairs Officer, ESCAP, delivered a presentation on “Laws and institutional frameworks governing international migration in North and Central Asia” on behalf of Mr. Vadim Ni. Ms. Steinmayer explained the legal frameworks and institutional frameworks in place to manage migration in the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan, as the main countries of destination of the subregion, noting convergences in the use of patents (licences), as well as continuing differences between these countries in terms of the laws with regards to procedures, rights of migrant workers, regularization of migrant workers in irregular situations, and institutions administering these processes.

28. Ms. Steinmayer also outlined the tools and policies used by countries of origin in the subregion to manage outbound migration, noting the existence of migration policies in several countries, laws governing private employment agencies and contracts of migrant workers, as well as measures taken to study on labour markets in countries of destination and to ensure pre-departure orientation of departing migrant workers. She also noted various forms of bilateral, regional, and international cooperation, including bilateral agreements between countries of the subregion, agreements reached through the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the EAEU, and the United Nations. She noted the persistence of challenges, such as with regards to access to social protection and ensuring adherence to international standards.

29. Mr. Mara Kangerlinski, Director of the Department for Humanitarian and Social Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Azerbaijan, acted as a discussant for the session. He noted the position of Azerbaijan as a country of origin and destination, and briefed participants on measures undertaken to manage migration, notably the enactment of the migration code in 2013 and the establishment of the State Migration Service, which had the status of an independent ministry. He further highlighted the role of policy coordination within Government as well as collaboration with international organizations, notably the International Organization for Migration, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and with countries within and beyond the region, such as the European Union. He highlighted agreements reached with the European Union with regards to a simplified visa regime and readmission of Azerbaijani citizens in an irregular situation, as well as the adoption of a mobility partnership, which covered migration between Azerbaijan and European countries in a comprehensive fashion. He further emphasized the importance of the rule of law in ensuring the effective management of international migration, and suggested that harmonization of legislation in line with international best practice could be helpful.

30. The subsequent discussions focused on barriers to the adoption of international conventions by countries of destination; measures undertaken by countries of origin to ensure that migrant workers engage in regular migration; the roles of national migration services and frontline staff in implementing policies; the need for secondary legislation to ensure the implementation of laws and policies on migration; the role of regional dialogue processes on migration, such as the Almaty Process; the potential support that can be provided by international agencies to countries in the sphere of migration; the importance of mixed migration flows in North and Central Asia; and the effectiveness of bilateral agreements.

J. Regional integration, migration and development in North and Central Asia

31. The session was moderated by Ms. Caress Schenk, Assistant Professor of Political Science, Nazarbayev University.

32. Mr. Leonid Efimov, Deputy Head of International Cooperation Department, Eurasian Development Bank (EADB) noted the results of recent surveys carried out by the EADB, which showed high numbers of respondents in countries of the region expressing a willingness to migrate, particularly to the Russian Federation. He also provided the results of a study carried out by the EADB on the potential for developing labour-intensive export-oriented industries in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan as an alternative to migration,

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