



FOR PARTICIPANTS ONLY

SDD/EGM.1/2010/4
6 September 2010

ENGLISH ONLY

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Expert Group Meeting on Strengthening Capacities for Migration Management
in Central Asia

20 and 21 September 2010
Bangkok

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I. Organizational arrangements

The Expert Group Meeting on “Strengthening Capacities for Migration Management in Central Asia” will take place at the United Nations Conference Centre, Bangkok, from 20 to 21 September 2010. It is being organized by the Social Development Division of ESCAP.

II. Participation

The Expert Group Meeting will be attended by experts from Central Asia involved in the formulation and/or implementation of policies related to international migration and development.

III. Objectives of the Meeting

The objective of the Expert Group Meeting is to increase the capacity of policymakers to design more effective policies on international migration and remittances. The meeting will review good practices and discuss the role of South-South Cooperation.

The expected outcome of the Expert Group Meeting will be a set of recommendations on addressing migration and remittances in order to increase the potential development impact. These recommendations will be submitted to the Asia-Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) 2010, which will take place from 22 to 24 September 2010 in Bangkok, for consideration.

IV. Format of the Expert Group Meeting

The Expert Group Meeting will offer a platform for the sharing of experiences and good practices. To this end, the Workshop will feature presentations by country experts and independent experts, panel discussions, and structured plenary discussions. The panel discussions will feature a limited number of short presentations, followed by a structured discussion leading to the identification of key points and recommendations.

V. Expected substantive contributions by experts

Participants are encouraged to exchange information and experience on the following issues:

Key trends and challenges on migration in Central Asia:

- Numbers of persons migrating out, if possible disaggregated by sex and by destination countries
- National laws and policies related to out-migration and legal arrangements with the respective countries of destination.
- Approach towards women's migration
- The role of remittances in the economy and society and government's policies to use remittances as a tool for financing development
- Social impact of international migration in the country of origin
- Main issues migrants face in the countries of destination

It would also be appreciated if experts could bring the following documents:

- Data on migrant inflows and stock by country of origin in the case of countries of destination of migrants;
- Data on migrant outflows and stock of nationals abroad in the case of countries of origin of migrants;
- A sample of a Memorandum of Understanding on the Exchange of Manpower (if existing) with the respective country of origin or destination.

More detailed guidelines on the content of each session will be sent to the nominated participants shortly.

VI. Background of the Workshop

International migration is increasingly being considered as a tool for economic and social development. Issues like intra- and inter-regional migration trends; magnitude and dynamics of remittances; participation of women and its impact on gender equality; and migration of qualified workers were considered as priority matters during the United Nations High Level Dialogue (HLD) on International Migration and Development (September 2006).

Since the High-level dialogue, ESCAP and other UN systems organizations held several regional meetings and workshops in international migration, mainly with participation from South, South-East and East Asia, but participation from Central Asia has been so far limited. Moreover, most existing regional studies have been focusing on South Asia, South-East Asia and East Asia.

There is thus value in integrating Central Asian countries in the regional dialogue on international migration. This Expert Group Meeting seeks to identify the main issues related to migration and development in Central Asian countries and to give experts from these countries opportunity to discuss how experience from other Asian countries in the management of international migration could be of value for policies in their own countries.

VII. Background on substantive issues to be addressed

Migration has become one of the most visible outcomes of globalization and overall migration flows have increased in the past decades. The Asian region is a key region of origin of migrants to other regions, but at the same time experiences increasing migration within the region. One of the important migration flows in the region is from Central Asia and the Caucasus to the Russian Federation and recently Kazakhstan.

As a result, remittances have become a key source of foreign capital inflows in several economies of Central Asia. In 2007, remittance inflows accounted for 45.5 per cent of GDP in Tajikistan, 19 per cent of GDP in Kyrgyzstan, and 9 per cent of GDP in Armenia (UNDP 2009 Human Development Report). However, in 2009 a large number of migrant workers returned from the Russian Federation due to the global economic crisis. This is expected to result in a sharp fall in remittances of up to 60 percent.

An increasing number of migrants from Central Asia are women, with the majority of them migrating independently and only a minority migrating with their spouses. Studies have also shown that the level of education of migrating women is higher than the level of education of migrating men, although women migrant workers mostly perform low-skilled jobs in the countries of destination which are not attractive to the local population.

Labour migration from Central Asia and the resulting remittance flows are a rather new phenomenon in the Central Asian region. So far, most Central Asian countries have neither coherent policies on migration, nor an integrated strategy on harnessing remittances as a tool for financing for development. Designing adequate policies requires a realistic picture of the on-going migration processes and an objective assessment of the levels of stocks and flows of international migrants, the volume of remittances and their impact at the macro-economic and household level as well as the social impact of international migration. The migration of women deserves special attention, since female migrants are often more vulnerable due to the nature of the work they perform abroad and because of the larger impact on the children left behind and gender dynamics when the mother migrates. At the same time, migration of women, which turns them into the main breadwinners, has been pointed out as a tool for empowerment and allowing a shift in traditional gender roles.

Some countries in the Asian region have long experience with the management of labour migration and remittance flows and have found ways to better harness remittance flows as a tool for development. Exchange of experience and information, and South-South-Cooperation with other Asian countries could strengthen capacities in Central Asian

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