

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,
Honorable Partners,
Dear Colleagues,

On behalf of the Government of Georgia, it is my privilege to extend our deepest respect towards the International Organization for Migration, paying tribute to its highly valued work globally and to convey our congratulations on the occasion of IOM 60th anniversary of operation in the field of migration to the benefit of all.

I would like to underline the fruitful cooperation between IOM and Georgia developed through years of work on joint initiatives and joint responses to migration challenges, such as the Mobility Partnership, the Visa Facilitation, the Readmission Agreement and the “Eastern Partnership”. Georgia participates actively in the international migration debate and regional processes such as the “Prague Declaration”, the “Budapest process” and the “Soderkoping process”, which greatly contribute to the integration of the country into the European family.

In response to the challenges raised by migration, Georgia has made important steps towards the development of its national migration management system. By the end of 2010, a governmental commission for migration was set up by the Prime Minister, to elaborate the country’s migration policy and assist in the implementation of relevant agreements between Georgia and the EU.

I would like to draw your attention and express hope for future cooperation in the following three directions of priority for Georgia, considering the migration management challenges that the country is facing at this stage:

1) Preventing illegal migration

In this respect, it is important to consider integrated border control mechanisms and the development of migration data analysis and development of respective institutional training systems in the area of migration and asylum.

It is not of less importance to pursue further active information campaigns, raising awareness among broad strata of the population on the risks of irregular migration and legal employment opportunities abroad.

In this respect, I would like to note the fruitful cooperation between our Ministry and IOM. Namely, within the framework of the signed Memorandum, IOM

Resource Centres were taken over by the Ministry and “Information-Consultation Centres for Migrants” were established, which successfully operate in Tbilisi and three other regions of Georgia.

2) Assistance in Reintegration of Returning Georgian Nationals

Georgia looks forward to cooperating with IOM further in this area, given the IOM’s extensive experience on the reintegration of returnees in Georgia and worldwide. Information and experience sharing between colleagues in IOM Georgia and our Ministry can be very beneficial for the successful reintegration of Georgian nationals returning from European countries.

For example, the Ministry, in active cooperation with the IOM, is implementing a project “Targeted Initiative for Georgia”, funded by the EU and 9 Member States, envisaging, inter alia, support to the reintegration of returning migrants. In addition, the established network of seven job counseling and placement centers (JCPs) that IOM has been operating across Georgia has proven to be an efficient tool for responding to the reintegration needs of the returnees.

Extended support to this network would be recommendable to ensure wider access to such services for returned migrants in places of return as well as for potential migrants by providing them with alternative solutions to migration in the form of direct job placement and self-employment.

3) Migration and Development

- **EU – Georgia relations regarding visa liberalization and circular migration**

Georgia puts particular emphasis on the proper implementation of the visa facilitation and readmission agreements with the European Union and is striving to launch the visa liberalization process with the EU, with the end goal of visa free travel to the EU. As a part of the Mobility Partnership program with the EU, Georgia looks forward to signing the circular migration agreement with the Republic of France and properly implementing it in a due manner.

The signature of bilateral labor migration agreements with European Union Member States and other countries of destination for Georgian migrants will encourage legal employment abroad of persons with different levels of

qualification and will open opportunities to young specialists and students to enhance their qualifications.

- **Utilization of the potential of Diaspora for economic development**

Capitalizing on the potential of migration as a positive force for development can enhance the effort to implement a more comprehensive approach.

Georgia is also seeking for effective ways to forge stronger links between migration and development. In this process, the potential of diaspora has particular importance.

Diasporas can contribute to economic, social and cultural progress in their home countries through effective utilization of their professional skills and investment potential. Furthermore, building on IOM's experience and institutional knowledge, optimal utilization of remittances shall become feasible.

Some innovative initiatives have been implemented within the EU funded Joint Migration and Development Initiative in Georgia, formerly coordinated by IOM.

With the expanding scope of its work, IOM's membership is also expanding. I would like to congratulate the new members on their admission. At the same time, I would like to stress that it is important that such expansion is fully transparent and to the benefit of the membership. We would recommend that membership applications, therefore, be reviewed prior to being brought to the Council Session for direct approval to ensure full transparency and due consideration of the admissions in this organization. Such joint deliberation will allow us all to continue to work together to tackle challenges in a changing global context.

The mission and work undertaken by IOM is highly appreciated, valued and admired worldwide. Georgia will remain committed to further fruitful cooperation with IOM to develop national migration system in response to migration challenges.

Thank you.