

Dear Chairperson,

Mr. Director General,

Distinguished Delegates,

I wish to begin by expressing our sincere appreciation towards the work of the International Organization for Migration. Efforts of the IOM is of critical importance, especially against the background of the ongoing global pandemic, unmitigated climate change and armed conflicts. In these difficult times, border closures and movement restrictions have been disproportionately affecting those most fragile, including many migrants with the pre-existing vulnerabilities. In light of this, we commend the IOM's global rapid COVID-19 Strategic Preparedness and Response plan, which have been designed to responding to the humanitarian and development needs in all regions of the world, depending on the particular needs of the affected country.

Mr. Chairperson,

For years, Georgia has been steadily developing and enhancing capacities of its own migration management mechanisms. Our strategy has been based on the concept of the whole of government approach, which we consider as the most effective and coordinated way of dealing with today's challenges. In this process, IOM has been one of the closest partners providing its assistance and valuable expertise in many areas of migration. Our cooperation with IOM includes but is not limited to enhancing border management capabilities, preventing human trafficking and addressing illegal migration. Building the pathways for safe, orderly and regular migration is another priority area in our combined efforts. In this connection, it is important to mention the IOM's assistance in developing and implementing circular labour migration schemes that are oriented on the triple win - involving destination countries, origin countries and the migrants themselves.

Excellences,

Since the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, Government of Georgia has been providing necessary assistance to our citizens abroad. For this purpose, the Ministry of foreign Affairs of Georgia along with its diplomatic missions and consular offices has switched to the emergency mode of operation and provided medical, technical and financial assistance, including the housing and food to more than 23,000 citizens of Georgia living abroad. Assistance in transportation was provided to more than 4700 citizens; Legal and technical assistance - to more than 9000 citizens; more than 300 citizens were provided with travel tickets; and up to 20 citizens were assisted in finding jobs.

Furthermore, Despite the closed borders and the cancellation of flights, from February to August 2020, an overall 116 flights were performed from countries, where a large number of Georgian citizens were left without funds and housing. With the support of the Georgian Government and the Coordination Council, more than 25,000 citizens have been able to return to Georgia by air, land and sea. Among them were 800 students, up to 500 persons with underlying illnesses, 123 persons with serious illness, more than 400 minors.

At the same time, the Government of Georgia has undertaken rapid steps in order to mitigate negative implications of the pandemic for the migrants residing in Georgia. On 5th of August, the Government issued a decree, according to which the alien or stateless persons who were legally residing on the territory of Georgia by 14th of March 2020 and were not able to leave the country before the expiration of their legal stay, had been authorized to stay on the territory of Georgia until 31st of December 2020. In addition, during their emergency stay in the country, all migrants in Georgia have been provided with equal opportunities for medical treatment.

In conclusion of my remarks, let me reiterate Georgia's steadfast support to the IOM's global endeavor to ensure the human and orderly migration across the globe, and to uphold the dignity and well-being of all migrants.

I thank you!