

STATEMENT

by Mr. Gagik Hovhannisyan,  
Charge d'Affaires a.i, Permanent Mission of Armenia  
Geneva, 03.12.2008

Distinguished Mr. Chairperson,  
Distinguished Director General,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me begin at the outset by extending to you and the elected members of the Bureau my delegations most heartfelt congratulations and wishing you very successful leadership.

I would also like to express our profound appreciation of the Director General's opening presentation, which we found very coherent and interesting with his clear vision of the objectives and challenges for the organization.

The Government of Armenia works very closely with IOM in implementing various projects that are priorities for the government. The IOM Mission in Armenia mainly works in the following fields: Technical Cooperation on Migration and Capacity Building; Labor Migration; Counter-Trafficking; Migration and Development; Mass Information on Migration; Movements and Assisted Returns. The Mission is expanding its portfolio to cover Migration Health area also.

Through its technical cooperation programs, IOM has been offering advisory services on migration and migration-related issues to the Government of Armenia to assist it in the development, implementation, and management of

migration policy and legislation to prevent irregular migration, to facilitate regular beneficial migration, and provide assistance with various aspects of migration-related issues.

We work with IOM in the field of the border management reform, in particular, IOM is supporting the Armenia's Government in expanding its border management reform through expansion of the Border Management Information System (BMIS) to border crossing points. BMIS will become an integral part in the integrated border management (cooperation and coordination among border management agencies) system, a program on the establishment of which is anticipated to be carried out in 2009 with the support of the EU. We consider IOM an indispensable partner in this area.

Since 2001, Armenia actively participated in the inter-regional migration and asylum management dialogue (the "Cluster" Process) between the sending and transit countries of the South Caucasus, and receiving EU Member States supported by IOM. Through the Cluster Process, mechanisms and policies to reduce irregular migration are being promoted while simultaneously strengthening the South Caucasus' institutional capacity and systems to promote legal migration and sustainable return and reintegration practices and policies.

Armenia prioritizes signing of bilateral readmission agreements with the EU countries and sees the link between readmission and visa facilitation as further perspective. At present, Armenia has signed and ratified readmission agreements with 5 European countries and currently is considering the draft agreements with 4 other European Countries.

IOM has been active also in counter-trafficking activities in Armenia, in particular, seven large counter-trafficking projects were implemented in Armenia ranging from research and capacity building to victim assistance and public awareness. Working with its partners, IOM was very useful in offering

direct assistance to victims of trafficking through return and reintegration programs.

Furthermore, IOM has been involved in the voluntary repatriation of refugees to Armenia, mainly in support of the repatriation activities of the UNHCR. IOM also facilitates successful integration of migrants and refugees in the host societies.

Since the end of 2004, Armenia has registered a steadily growing number of asylum seekers and refugees from Iraq. Currently Armenia hosts more than 1000 Iraqis registered with the Government as asylum seekers and refugees. Iraqi refugees/asylum seekers in Armenia are in vital need of material assistance and support in integration into the Armenian society. The “Self-reliance and Integration through Micro-Enterprise Development” project (MED), helping individuals (including asylum seekers, refugees and displaced persons) to become self-sufficient through micro-credit schemes, including micro-enterprise training, credit and employment opportunities, will be offering integration assistance to Iraqi refugees who fled to Armenia.

Armenia attaches great importance to the current projects being implemented with the assistance of the IOM and stresses the need for further cooperation and expansion of its activities in the country. The Government of Armenia stands ready to discuss the possibilities for future programming to the benefit of the population in need.

At the end, Mr. Chairperson, I would like to thank the IOM staff for their high professionalism and dedication that we have witnessed during their work.

I thank you