

The National Conference
“Kyrgyz labour migrant behaviour in the context of the global financial crisis”
Bishkek, 26 November 2009

Opening Statement
Ambassador Andrew Tesoriere, Head of the OSCE Centre in Bishkek

Distinguished Madam Minister, Madam Chairperson, Distinguished participants,

I am pleased to join the previous speakers in welcoming you to this conference dedicated to the latest trends in the labour migration from Kyrgyzstan during this global financial crisis.

Migration is an important part of OSCE’s comprehensive approach to security and the 2009 OSCE Greek Chairmanship has accorded it special priority. Effective management and international cooperation have become ever more important as the volume of international migration continues to swell and more and more countries become affected by migratory movements.

The correlation between migration and economic growth is evident. Numerous studies show that migratory flows have a significant and positive impact on national economies. In the case of Kyrgyzstan, this country has been benefiting from migrant remittances, and skills and knowledge acquired by returning migrants for some time now. Kyrgyz labour migrant remittances have become a significant source of household income for thousands of family members who remain in the country, and have particularly helped less-well off families. OSCE welcomes discussion both at this Conference and beyond on how the Kyrgyz government and other actors can provide a more conducive environment that maximizes the benefits of remittances and the economic and human potential of returning migrants.

Against this background, the OSCE Centre in Bishkek was happy to conduct a nationwide survey on migration, whose main findings will be presented to you today. We are indebted to our partners, CASE-Kyrgyzstan and Office of ACTED in Kyrgyzstan, for their excellent work in conducting the survey and summarizing its main findings. The survey principally focused on the latest trends in labour migration from Kyrgyzstan to Russia with a special emphasis on returning migrants and migrant remittances.

After presenting the survey findings, we invite your active participation in the discussion which will follow the presentation. In the afternoon we will be pleased to welcome our colleagues, Mr Nilim Baruah from ILO office in Moscow, and Ms Christine Aghazarm from IOM Geneva, who have kindly agreed to join us today in Bishkek in order to share their visions on the linkages between migrant return and remittances and the economic growth both from global and regional, Central Asian, perspectives. We will complete the day by developing joint recommendations based on the main outcomes of the survey.

In particular in the current financial and economic situation, it is important to stress that migration is a positive force which can help Governments soften, even overcome, economic downturns. This Conference should give careful consideration to different policy options on handling migration and migrant labour. We should examine how policies such as tightening regulatory regimes and curbing migration impact both on nations sending and receiving migrants ; and which policies best serve long-term socio-economic development.

The OSCE calls for reinforced international co-operation among the Kyrgyz government, international organisations and the non-governmental sector in order to address effectively this important topic.

I wish you all a successful conference and hope your active participation will generate some practical ideas and advice for policy makers. Thank you.