Summary/Conclusions

1. On 4 November 2010 the first Meeting of the Budapest Process Working Group on the Silk Routes Region was held in Istanbul, Turkey, hosted by the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and co-chaired by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Interior.

2. The objectives of the meeting were to establish a common ground for cooperation in this new framework, explore possible avenues for future work as well as look at topical priorities.

3. The meeting brought together representatives of 31 countries (Afghanistan, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, China, Croatia, Finland, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Iraq, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, the Netherlands, Norway, Pakistan, Poland, Romania, the Russian Federation, Serbia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Turkey, Ukraine and the United Kingdom) as well as the European Commission, the International Organization for Migration, INTERPOL, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) as the Secretariat of the Budapest Process.

4. The meeting was opened by Turkey, as the Chair of the Budapest Process. The opening statement was followed by welcoming remarks from the United Kingdom and Switzerland, as contributors to the meeting, and ICMPD, as the Secretariat.

5. The Secretariat gave an overview of the history, structure, functioning and basic principles of the Budapest Process, followed by a presentation by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey of the third phase of the Budapest Process and the general structure and vision for the Working Group on the Silk routes Region.

6. The Ministry of Interior of Turkey presented legislative and other measures taken within the Turkish administration for the management of migration and migration flows. The Ministry especially called attention to the need to combat irregular migration through cooperation between countries of origin, transit and destination, especially concerning ascertaining the identities of migrants and conducting dignified return operations. In the case of Turkey, national measures have included penal code amendments and strengthened training and capacity building for the relevant administrative bodies. Cooperation with the judiciary and civil society at the national level was also highlighted.

7. The new partner countries, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, China, Iraq, Pakistan and Syria presented the main points of their migration situation including challenges and priorities for international cooperation. The new partner countries stated a great interest in joining the Budapest Process and in taking active part in the Working Group on the Silk routes Region.

8. Austria, Finland, Greece, the Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, Sweden and the United Kingdom as well as the European Union Delegation to Turkey, the International Organization for Migration and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees presented their suggestions for future cooperation within the framework of the Working Group. There is a strong general commitment to the Budapest Process and to the foreseen geographical extension. Several participating countries and organisations reiterated their interest to be involved and take active part in the Working Group on the Silk Routes Region, including in possible project follow-up.

9. The following conclusions were made:
   a. The new geographic division and further extension of the Budapest Process with the new Working Group on Silk Routes Region is a very positive development which should be pursued. The commitment and active involvement of interested countries and organisations in pursuing the new direction is warmly welcomed.
b. The flexible and informal structure of the Budapest Process is an asset which should be kept. Also, the principles of mutual respect, equal footing and genuine dialogue should be retained. Furthermore, synergy with other migration initiatives and Migration Dialogues should be enhanced in order to avoid duplication.

c. Interregional migration management is a common responsibility. In this context, the engagement of countries of origin, transit, and destination is needed to achieve genuine cooperation. For this reason, it is important to continue establishing contacts and networks between migration officials in relevant countries.

d. It was acknowledged that countries of origin are also destination countries faced with similar problems as other destination countries. Not only receiving countries but also countries of transit are in need of cooperation with the countries of origin.

e. In the future work, the following issues should be considered:

i. Effective management of enhanced regular migration will be helpful in diminishing illegal migration flows. Therefore, channels of legal migration should be improved and administrative burdens for legal migrants reduced.

ii. The rights of migrants should be protected under all circumstances. Policies restricting migration in the name of anti-terrorism measures and the global economic crisis should be avoided.

iii. Possibilities of circular migration should be further explored and obstacles identified.

iv. Well-managed migration can be among the driving forces for development both in countries of origin and destination. The links between migration and development should thus be emphasised, along with the need of assistance and knowhow transfer from developed countries to the less developed ones.

v. The aim should be for secure but open borders supporting the legitimate movement of people and goods while preventing irregular movements and cross-border crime.

vi. Prevention of irregular migration constitutes a challenge of fundamental importance for all the countries of the Eurasian region. Thus, it is important to understand, acknowledge and address the root causes of (repetitive) irregular migration and promote new migration management tools/means such as migration profiles, readmission agreements and assisted voluntary returns.

vii. To this end, an important component would be to improve flexible bilateral and multilateral cooperation on combating organised crime. Exchange of expertise and good practices on improved document security, including identity documents as well as breeder documents, would be welcome.

viii. While taking measure to counteract irregular migration, it is important to respect the principle of human rights and dignity of all migrants. Taking into account the mixed nature of migration flows, asylum seekers, victims of trafficking and other vulnerable groups in need of protection, must be identified and adequately supported. Especially the protection of minors and women should be highlighted.

ix. Measures should be taken to raise awareness of the dangers of illegal migration in source countries as well as provide information on possibilities to migrate legally. Awareness-raising on the positive effects of migration in countries of destination would also be important.

x. All return and readmission procedures should be humane, and respect the human rights and dignity of migrants. Preference should always be given to voluntary return.

xi. Sustainable voluntary return schemes coupled with reintegration measures and support provided to returnees in the countries of origin can facilitate their contribution to development.
10. Based on the priorities expressed by the partner countries as well as participating countries and organisations, the Secretariat elaborated and presented a draft strategic work plan for the working group.

11. The Chair thanked all participating countries for their support to the Working Group on the Silk Routes Region and for their commitment to concrete and extensive contributions to the future work of the group. Active involvement in activities was welcomed. The Chair furthermore announced its intention to host the next meeting of the Working Group in April 2011, possibly in one of the new partner countries.

12. The participants entrusted the Secretariat with the task of summarising discussions and conclusions as well as to circulate results.

13. Participants thanked Turkey for the warm hospitality as host and chair of the meeting and ICMPD, as the Secretariat, for the organisation and the substance preparations.