1. The 2nd meeting of the Budapest Process Working Group on the Silk Routes Region hosted by the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs in cooperation with ICMPD was held on 7-8 June 2011 in Nevşehir, Turkey. The meeting focused on discussing ways to foster cooperation on migration issues between the countries of the Budapest Process and the Silk Route.

2. The meeting brought together representatives of 26 countries (Afghanistan, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Czech Republic, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Turkey, United Kingdom and Ukraine) as well as the ECO (Economic Cooperation Organization), the Delegation of the European Union to Turkey, ICMPD, IOM, UNHCR and UNDP.

3. Turkey informed the representatives of changing its migration profile from a traditional emigration country to a transit and destination country and measures taken for combating illegal migration as well as its efforts in developing a comprehensive migration management strategy. In this respect, the inclusive process used for developing the draft Law on Foreigners and International Protection was presented. By involving numerous actors, including civil society, international organisations, etc. in addition to government institutions, Turkey has developed a comprehensive and advanced law regarding migration management, which is expected to be adopted in 2011.

   Turkey put emphasis on unblocking and regulating the legal migration channels as the best way to control irregular migration. It was emphasized that it would be a more realistic approach to tackle illegal migration if the countries of origin, transit and destination could develop initiatives aiming at the root causes of the problem. In this sense, the importance the Working Group on the Silk Routes Region as providing a platform for dialogue and cooperation between several different regions in Europe, the Balkans, South Caucasus, Central Asia, Middle East and South Asia was underlined by Turkey.

4. Factual and informative presentations were made by the representatives of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Tajikistan regarding the migration situation in their countries. The
presentations indicated that the partner countries have undertaken a number of initiatives in the field of migration management. In particular, specific progress was made with regard to returns in Afghanistan, in the area of combating human trafficking in Pakistan and as regards prevention of exploitation of labour migrants and identifying the links between migration and development by Bangladesh. Special emphasis was placed on promoting and regulating labour migration in the case of Tajikistan. Common problems of refugees, IDPs and returns were mentioned. The willingness for cooperation was highlighted in all presentations.

5. It was expressed by the representatives that the Working Group provided a strong platform for deepening contacts and developing cooperation among all participating countries. The unique participation allows for discussions among the States which otherwise have few opportunities to have in-depth and informal discussions. Thus, the flexible structure of the Budapest Process was underlined as a great value and culminated in the expression of support and commitment to the Silk Routes Region Working Group by the States.

6. The following issues were pointed out regarding opportunities and recommendations for improving cooperation and building confidence among the States:

a. Several areas emerged as priority concerns such as sustainable returns and reintegration, promoting legal and labour migration channels as well as circular migration, the development dimension of migration, border management, security issues and cooperation agreements. The European Commission representative encouraged the States to guarantee the humane treatment, dignity and human rights of migrants, in particular of vulnerable groups like unaccompanied minors.

b. A number of countries recalled the need for real time exchange of information (and intelligence) as being crucial for early warning and combating irregular migration. Accuracy of data and instant exchange thereof are a must to enable best possible performance. Cooperation between ILOs (Immigration Liaison Officers) was considered key in this respect. The possibility of establishing an ILO network with the Silk Routes countries should be considered.

c. China, as an observer country, underlined the principle of common responsibility of countries of origin, transit and destination to effectively manage migration and tackle irregular migration. The cooperation should be based on mutual respect and benefits. Migrants should not fall victims to international financial crisis, domestic politics or anti-terror measures.

d. It was stressed that the Budapest Process platform could be used to also match the different interests of the States: for instance, while some countries are looking for qualified workers, other countries are looking for employment opportunities for their citizens abroad.

7. The following conclusions were made regarding the future work of the Working Group on the Silk Routes Region:

a. The Strategic Work Plan of the Working Group was endorsed with minor changes and additions proposed by States. This Work Plan provides the general framework for cooperation and activities of the Working Group in the upcoming years and as such the priorities laid in there can be amended in view of arising needs and developments.

b. Upon the proposal of the Chair, it was decided that an annual training programme will be developed starting from 2012 targeting the officials of all interested States, but in particular those of the Silk Routes countries. Proposed will be 3-4 joint trainings a year.
Possible areas of training were identified as combating smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons as well as document security. In this respect a training programme will be presented to the States by the Chair and the Secretariat before the next meeting. States interested in hosting the trainings were invited to notify the Secretariat on the possible modalities. The Chair also invited the States to express their priorities for the training programme.

It was agreed that the first training could be held in Turkey. Ukraine and Belarus also expressed their interest in hosting the training activities in their respective training centres, which already offer international courses for law enforcement officers, provided that funding is available. The Secretariat will contact Belarus, Turkey and Ukraine for further details.

c. The project proposal on fostering cooperation in the area of migration with the Silk Routes countries was endorsed by the States. In particular, the Silk Routes countries Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan expressed their support to the project along with other States and international organizations present. The Secretariat will present the draft project proposal to the States for their final comments. The States are invited to provide their comments before the end of July 2011.

Switzerland announced that it would allocate up to 200,000 Euro’s as co-funding for the project. Turkey announced it would support the project with 150,000 Euro. The Afghan Delegation announced that they would make a symbolic contribution of 500 Euro to demonstrate their support for the project. Other States were also invited to support the project financially.

d. The new partner countries (the Silk Routes countries) were requested to provide the names and contact details of their focal points for the Budapest Process.

e. It was agreed that the Silk Routes countries meet the day before the next meeting of the whole Working Group in order to focus on cooperation issues among themselves and to prepare for the plenary session.

f. As the new partner countries, the Silk Routes countries will be invited to the next Senior Officials Meeting of the Budapest Process, which is to take place in Turkey towards the end of 2011.

8. The Chair thanked all delegates for their active participation in the meeting and announced Georgia’s intention to host the third meeting of the Working Group in the beginning of 2012.

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