Summary/conclusions

1. On 28-29 June 2012 the 3rd meeting of the Budapest Process Working Group on the Silk Routes Region chaired by Turkey, was held in Tbilisi, Georgia. The meeting focused on migration and development in the Silk Routes Region. It constituted at the same time the 2nd Intergovernmental Meeting within the framework of the project on “Fostering Cooperation in the Area of Migration with and in the Silk Routes Region” implemented under the umbrella of the Budapest Process.

2. The Working Group meeting gathered 60 participants from 25 countries - Afghanistan, Albania, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, China, Denmark, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Islamic Republic of Iran, Kyrgyzstan, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Netherlands, Norway, Pakistan, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom - and 12 organisations - Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR), Delegation of the European Union to Georgia, Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), European University Institute (EUI), International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC), International Centre for Migration Policy Development, (ICMPD), International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), Innovations and Reforms Centre, International Organization for Migration (IOM), Islamic Relief Worldwide, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

3. The meeting was opened by Georgia as the host, Turkey as the Chair of the Budapest Process, Denmark as the Presidency of the European Union and ICMPD as the Secretariat of the Budapest Process. After the opening of the meeting, the European Union Delegation to Georgia shared their observations on the policy framework and related developments.

4. The topic of the meeting was considered both timely and important, and the meeting catered for active participation and discussions. The objective of the meeting was to take stock on how migration is factored into development activities in the Silk Routes Region, to discuss links between migration and development as well as needs in this field.
5. As food for thought and discussion, an academic introduction was given to the meeting by ICMPD and EUI. The following main points were made:

a) The links between migration and development, although recognised a century ago, are still discussed. According to the traditional school, migration was seen as a one way street taken once in a lifetime and decided upon by the migrant individually. New migration theories in the 1990s described a New Economy of Migration. Migration was perceived as a coping strategy of households with the main migration motive being improvement of living conditions. At this time the discourse on migration also started speaking of transnationalism and migration as a process of continuous movement over time. The development effects of migration were debated, with the realisation that migrant remittances doubled the size of official development aid.

b) Human development - defined as the process of enlarging people’s choices or as the expansion of people’s freedom to live their lives as they choose – is now seen as the key in understanding migration movements. Migration may assist people to develop and make use of their potential. There are different theories about the impact of migration on development – both optimistic and pessimistic. Among negative aspects it can be mentioned that brain drain impacts negatively upon the development of sending countries, that remittances create dependencies and constitute an unreliable source of income and may aggravate income inequality in countries of origin, that they are rarely invested productively and create a culture of migration: the “image of the wealthy migrant”. Among positive aspects it can be considered that migration leads to an optimal allocation of labour, does not cause “brain drain”, in fact it increases the productivity and earnings of those left behind. Additionally migration creates not only capital but also social remittances (e.g. the acquired know-how used upon return), and consumption of remittances improves the living standards of those left behind, in particular better education for children. Remittances can also contribute to economic growth if the consumption goods are locally produced.

c) Up until 2000, the impact of migration on development was generally seen positive among migration actors, including states. An emphasis was put on migration and development links and on mainstreaming migration into development planning. Depending on how the impact of development is defined – negative or positive – and at what level - national, sectoral, local or individual – there is no single recipe/formula for the relationship between migration and development fitting all.

6. In the second session on “Stocktaking on planning and needs”, the Silk Routes countries (Afghanistan, China and Pakistan) described their situation and how they factor migration into development. NGOs in the Silk Routes Region (ACBAR, ICMC and Islamic Relief Worldwide) shared their impressions of development needs in the countries.

7. In the third session, international organisations (EUI, IFRC, IOM, UNDP and UNHCR) gave presentations on their role in factoring migration into development and on links between humanitarian assistance and migration and development.

8. Reflecting the presentations and interventions made by the various participants, the following points should be mentioned:

a) Most displaced people are hosted within the Silk Routes Region. Participants shared an acknowledgement and appreciation of Iran and Pakistan as large refugee hosting countries.
Iran and Pakistan have both implemented several measures to regularise the situation of refugees and provide them with basic services.

b) Lack of development, livelihood opportunities, security concerns and natural disasters continue to cause displacements and make returns and reintegration difficult in the region.

c) Internal labour migration within the Silk Routes Region is significant. Several areas are rural and have a low educational level. Migration for work is simply a part of life.

d) Burden sharing and joint efforts with the engagement of the international community are needed. In this regard we must look for more durable solutions. Actors engaged in development assistance should strive for better coordination of actions (agencies, organisations and NGOs).

e) Combined with the efforts to curb irregular migration all countries need to develop legal migration opportunities for work force, matching offer and demand. Migration policies should regulate the movement of migrants without being unreasonably restrictive. The importance of a migrant friendly approach in destination countries was underlined, including family friendly policies.

f) Although it is important to differentiate between economic migrants and people in need of protection, the legitimate rights of all persons on the move, including stateless persons, should be protected. Especially human rights of migrants and the principle of non-refoulement should be mentioned. In this regard already existing international protection instruments and principles should be taken into account.

g) Both destination and origin countries should aim at benefiting from migration to the best. Migrants and refugees should be seen as a resource and in addition to brain drain we should also consider brain gain effects. The better embedded and integrated people are in their host societies, the better this resource can be used.

h) In order to prevent brain waste countries should work together to facilitate recognition of diplomas. At the same time, gaps in training and education hindering such recognition should be discussed and lead to further improved quality of universities and schools in countries of origin.

i) Remittances continue to be an important source of income for the sending countries. Both origin and destination countries should work to facilitate the transfer and utilisation of remittances.

j) Reintegration assistance should increasingly be “tailor-made”. When designing reintegration programmes we must look at the individual. In order to make returns sustainable, more targeted skills and job training for returning migrants is needed to fit really specified needs of countries of origin. Training should be made available especially when opportunities for previous livelihoods (example: agriculture) are not an option anymore.

9. On the second day an account was given over the progress in the project “Fostering Cooperation in the Area of Migration with and in the Silk Routes Region” (Silk Routes project) funded by the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and Turkey and implemented by ICMPD under the umbrella of the Budapest Process since September 2011. Several activities (desk research, fact-finding missions, other visits and conferences) have been implemented
within the framework of the project and several others are planned. Illustrating the main challenges and opportunities found at fact-finding missions to Afghanistan and Pakistan the following main points were made:

a) Migration in Afghanistan and Pakistan is usually handled as a refugee issue and/or a matter of labour migration. Authorities are aware of the deficit of a comprehensive migration policy and are willing and ready to work (with international actors) in order to establish adequate policies.

a) Coupled with the weakening economic conditions and growing uncertainties about the legal status after 2012, Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran may increasingly look for opportunities to leave the two countries. In this regard the “Solutions Strategy for the Afghan refugees” proposed by UNHCR provides a good basis for discussion (the "solutions strategy" contains a package of measures aimed at supporting refugees, and tailored towards the specific needs of each of the three countries involved – Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan).

b) The return process in Afghanistan should be monitored better as there is no regular, systematic follow-up on returning persons and families and thorough knowledge on the reasons and outcomes of returns. It is believed that many of the actual returns taking place since 2012 have resulted in secondary movements either within Afghanistan (from rural to urban areas) or renewed emigration, mainly to Pakistan and Iran.

c) In addition, the ongoing exit talk makes many Afghans feel insecure about the future. With 2014 around the corner when international troops will be leaving the country, many Afghans have developed their personal exit strategies. In both Pakistan and Iran, there are efforts to regularise the situation of Afghan refugees, in particular unregistered Afghans. The registration of, and provision of services to, Afghan refugees in Iran is worldwide on an unprecedented level.

d) Afghanistan also hosts an estimated number of 90,000-100,000 labour migrants from Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bangladesh and China, mainly employed in construction and mines but also in the services sector.

e) It should be noted that most labour migration from Pakistan is bound for the Gulf countries and recently also to Korea.

f) For the transfer of remittances, the banking system needs to be developed further, especially in Afghanistan. Both in Afghanistan and Pakistan most transfers are made through informal channels, also due to the increasing controls over money transfers from the USA and Europe introduced for the fight against financing of terrorism.

g) Representatives of Afghanistan and Pakistan commented that mechanisms for follow-up and implementation are needed in terms of capacity building and training and that a training programme on migration, as for example proposed by ICMPD, would be very suitable to make education continuous. In this regard, no new infrastructure is needed but existing educational facilities should be used.

10. During the “tour de table” countries shared their views and priorities regarding the activities in the Silk Routes region, migration and development as well as the project. Several useful remarks were made on labour migration, regularisation prospects, training needs, sustainable voluntary return and the positive effects of migration on development. Participants expressed strong
appreciation for the Working Group on the Silk Routes Region as an established and useful platform for dialogue and coordination with and between the countries of the Silk Routes Region.

11. Iran, present for the first time, appreciated the Budapest Process platform, found the information exchange very useful and was looking forward to further engagement in this framework.

12. Participants generally welcomed the initiative to invite civil society actors to the Working Group meetings and would also welcome, for the work in the field of migration and development, the engagement also of development actors. Furthermore, the results of the Working Group could contribute to other fora, such as the Global Forum for Migration and Development (GFMD).

13. The following conclusions were made:

a) This Working Group meeting, for the first time solely focusing on Migration and Development, confirms the development of the Budapest Process into a balanced migration dialogue.

b) In line with the basic principles of the Budapest Process work, discussions should not be politicised but remain practical and unbiased.

c) Joint and continuous efforts are needed to support the efforts of the Silk Routes countries to mainstream migration into development but also to address the remaining development needs in the Silk Routes Region. Migration and development challenges are best addressed through a partnership approach and genuine (regional) cooperation.

d) The development of comprehensive policies is a pre-requisite in order to maximise development benefits and mitigate negative impacts. There is no single recipe fitting all – the individual situation of each country and in fact also each migrant must be taken into account.

e) In terms of utilising the potential of migrants for development, reintegration assistance and training for returning migrants should be “tailor made” to the specified needs of countries of origin and the individual.

f) Further (coordinated) capacity building measures and continuous training are needed. Initiatives for continuous education using existing infrastructure and facilities would be welcome.

14. The Chair thanked all participating countries for their engagement and contributions and entrusted the Secretariat with the task of summarising discussions and conclusions as well as to circulate results.