

CHAIR'S STATEMENT
**OF THE 12TH ASEM CONFERENCE OF DIRECTORS GENERAL OF IMMIGRATION AND
MANAGEMENT OF MIGRATORY FLOWS**

TOKYO, 9-10 OCTOBER 2013

- I. The 12th ASEM Conference of Directors General of Immigration and Management of Migratory Flows was hosted by the Immigration Bureau, Ministry of Justice, Japan at the Mita Kaigisho Conference Centre, Tokyo, Japan on 9-10 October 2013. It was attended by 13 delegates from ASEM Asian countries, 14 delegates from ASEM European countries and one delegate from the European Commission. The Minister of Justice Mr. Sadakazu Tanigaki welcomed the delegates and emphasized the important contribution of the annual ASEM conference to the furtherance of cooperation and exchange of views between Asian and European countries. The Government of Japan welcomed the participation and contribution of Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).
- II. Following the acknowledgement at the 9th ASEM Summit of Heads of State (Vientiane, Lao PDR, 5-6-November 2012) of the *“need to identify appropriate means of maximizing development benefits and responding to the challenges which migration poses to countries of origin, transit and destination, especially in light of the impact of the financial and economic crisis”*, as well as the call *“for the sharing of best practices and the exploration of comprehensive approaches with a view to maximizing the positive effects of such migration on development and decreasing the potential negative effects”*, the theme chosen for this Conference was “Migration Policy as a Strategy for Economic Growth”.
- III. This Conference followed the general discussions of the 10th and 11th ASEM Conferences held respectively in Ulan Bator, Mongolia (5-7 September 2011) and in Nicosia, Cyprus (30-31 October 2012), which stressed the relevance of the promotion of labour migration as a tool for development and the importance of effective migration management in filling labour shortages created by demographic and economic factors.
- IV. The 12th ASEM Conference of Directors General of Immigration and Management of Migratory Flows overviewed: 1) the current picture and challenges related to migration policies; 2) the migrant-receiving policies prompting immigration of specified categories of foreigners; 3) the migrant-receiving policies relating to lower-skilled labour migration; and 4) the migrant-sending policies as a strategy for economic growth.
- V. The conference examined key opportunities and challenges by analyzing different approaches to immigration policymaking. Participants recognized the connection between State sovereignty and immigration policies. The conference reviewed a typology for migration

policies as a strategy for economic growth, for example, policies to attract high-skilled workers or as a solution to labour shortages. Policies focusing on low-skilled labour migration were further analyzed, in particular, the opportunities and challenges inherent to temporary labour migration including the need to provide incentives for employers to comply with national labour migration policy. Finally, the challenges, risks and benefits related to migrant-sending policies, with a focus on the protection and information dissemination, were discussed and the importance of cooperation agreements was stressed. Consultations with experts and the public were also stressed as being important to the policy making process.

- VI. Regarding policies in migrant-receiving countries, and the promotion of immigration of specified categories of foreigners, the conference exchanged information on: incentives to attracting high-skilled migrants, challenges in implementation of policy of accepting high-skilled migrants, and evaluation methods for policy of accepting high-skilled migrants. Practices of different countries to facilitate legal movement of persons were discussed. Participants also exchanged lessons learned to accelerate and simplify immigration procedures while noting the need to adjust visa restrictions and strengthen programs for newly arrived immigrants to help them adapt more quickly. The conference examined different evaluation systems including: (i) research; (ii) analysis of migration trends; (iii) net overseas migration modeling; (iv) continuous surveys of migrant data; and (v) long term migration planning.
- VII. In relation to the migrant-receiving policies for low-skilled workers, the participants exchanged views on challenges and lessons learned including measures to enhance policy frameworks to manage both permanent and temporary migration. These issues were also discussed from the perspective of the European framework on freedom of movement. The challenge of ensuring temporary migration for certain types of migrant categories was discussed, together with related policy incentives, such as granting re-entry, or sanctions for employers hiring migrants on irregular status. The delegates mentioned the risk of the commodification of migration, and therefore the importance of incorporating a rights-based approach into the labour market strategies. Finally, cooperation between countries can play an important role and can be promoted at different levels including through bilateral agreements and regional consultative processes.
- VIII. Migration as a strategy for economic growth from the perspective of migrant-sending countries focused on experiences of immigration policies including for overseas employment. The participants discussed different ways to provide assistance to their nationals during employment abroad as well as ways to enhance the socio-economic benefits for sending countries. In this framework, pre-departure services, such as the provision of information on the labour markets and training on factors such as language, regulation and/or culture were noted as being effective in reducing the costs and risks related to migration and in maximizing its positive impacts. Moreover, the integration of migration into national development planning has been recognized as an important step in the process of linking migration to economic growth. Specific points such as review of the social costs of migration

and reducing remittance costs were also discussed. Finally, the importance of cooperation, bilateral as well as multilateral, was stressed as an important factor in linking migration and development. Countries of origin could benefit from skills of returning migrants.

- IX. By discussing the various existing policy approaches to migration management, the delegates stressed their relevance in terms of economic growth. The delegates recognized the importance of effective migration policies in a period characterized by demographic and economic challenges. It was thus acknowledged that migration management is a fundamental component of wider economic growth strategies, both at the national and at the regional/global levels. It was indeed recognized that economic and demographic factors create imbalances in the labour force at all skills levels, and that migration policies are essential in addressing them in both countries of origin and destination of migrants.
- X. The priorities that the participants noted in relation to migration policies and economic growth include the following:
- a. Strengthen cooperation between sending and receiving countries on the links between migration and sustainable development policies to promote economic growth;
 - b. Facilitate the work, study and residence, integration and return of foreigners in host countries by enhancing the protection and well-being of migrants through policy and legislation to be resolved through cooperation of both countries;
 - c. Increase inter-ministerial cooperation mechanisms and dialogue to improve migration management.

The conference also welcomed the ASEF's intention to expand cooperation with the conference's future activities and to participate as an observer.

- XI. The conference reiterated the recognition that the ASEM Migration Contact Points' list, which had been agreed to be created and maintained at the first Conference, is a useful tool for preparing and coordinating the Conference and communicating directly with the relevant authorities on immigration issues (including sharing forged documents' information), and should be regularly updated under the responsibility of the Chair Country of the ASEM Conference of the Directors General of Immigration and Management of Migratory Flows of the year.
- XII. Finally, the conference agreed that the host of the 13th ASEM Conference will be a European member state and proposed through the Migration Contact Points. Moreover, Singapore proposed to host the 14th ASEM conference which will be held in 2015.