



## United States Mission to the OSCE

### **Session 5: Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons**

As prepared for delivery by Ambassador Steven Pifer  
to the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting  
Warsaw, October 4, 2006

Mr. Moderator,

Refugee protection and the rights of internally displaced persons are issues of great interest to the United States. The 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, as well as the UN Guiding Principles for Internally Displaced People are landmark documents for the protection of refugees and displaced persons. The issue of migration has taken on greater importance for all OSCE countries in recent years. As a traditional immigrant nation, the United States promotes safe, legal, and humane migration, and is committed to advancing effective migration management policies, which include respecting the human rights of migrants, offering protection to refugees and asylum-seekers, opposing illegal migration, supporting counter-trafficking efforts, and encouraging the rapid integration of legal migrants.

The United States strongly supports the principle of protection of refugees. We thus remain disappointed by Kyrgyzstan's August decision to forcibly return five individuals to Uzbekistan, despite the designation of four of them as refugees by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The change in Kyrgyz refugee law that denies access to refugee status determination procedures for some asylum-seekers, and the disappearance in late August of four Uzbek asylum-seekers from southern Kyrgyzstan are other troubling developments. In February of this year, Ukrainian authorities forcibly returned ten Uzbek asylum-seekers to Uzbekistan. Similarly, Kazakhstan removed in November of last year nine Uzbek asylum-seekers to Uzbekistan, four of whom had registered with UNHCR, without appropriate administrative or judicial review. On a positive note, Kazakhstan allowed UNHCR to resettle an Uzbek refugee to a third country in August. We encourage the Government of Kazakhstan to continue such constructive engagement with UNHCR.

Elsewhere, our understanding is that twelve Uzbeks and one Kyrgyz national are currently detained in Ivanovo, Russia. UNHCR has reportedly determined that all thirteen are refugees within their mandate. We were concerned when the Prosecutor General announced plans to extradite these refugees to Uzbekistan, but we welcome Russia's decision to suspend extradition of these individuals. The United States hopes Russia will allow these individuals to be resettled through UNHCR placement.

Meanwhile, the United States urges the Government of Uzbekistan to end its practice of pressuring other governments to forcibly return Uzbek refugees and asylum seekers, as well as to stop pressuring families of refugees; to guarantee humane treatment of voluntary returnees; and to allow access to these individuals by the international community.

The United States welcomes the reforms Turkey has made to provide displaced persons with more avenues of redress through the “Law on the Compensation of Losses Resulting from Terrorist Acts and the Measures Taken Against Terrorism” (Law 5233), and the extension of the deadline for filing applications for reparation. At the same time, factors such as limited resources and the narrow definition of an internally displaced person impede repatriation and should be addressed.

In the Balkans, the 2005 Sarajevo Ministerial Declaration on Refugee Return and Integration was notable, as the governments of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia committed to solve the remaining population displacement by the end of 2006 through facilitating returns or local integration of refugees and IDPs. We call upon the three governments to intensify their efforts to meet their end-year goal and ensure displaced persons and refugees can find durable solutions for resettlement.

In the South Caucasus, the governments should continue their efforts to facilitate the “temporary” integration of over 900,000 refugees and IDPs, while waiting for peaceful resolutions to the frozen conflicts in the region. In particular, we urge the Government of Georgia to continue its important work of finalizing its national strategy for displaced persons and to ensure the return of the Meshketian Turks. We hope the governments of Armenia and Azerbaijan will continue addressing the most critical needs, including housing and medical care, of refugees and IDPs in their respective national development plans.

The United States will continue to monitor the situation of all IDPs in and from Kosovo, including Roma IDPs in northern Kosovo. We are pleased that many of these IDPs have chosen to move to a camp established by the international community, and will continue to call for the reconstruction of this community’s original settlement.

Mr. Moderator, the United States is dedicated to assisting asylum-seekers, refugees, victims of trafficking and smuggling in persons, and other vulnerable migrants. We urge all OSCE countries that do not already, to treat the protection needs of vulnerable migrants, refugees and displaced persons as priorities, and for those that do, to continue to uphold their international protection obligations.