

APPENDIX 1
TO THE RESOLUTION OF THE GOVERNMENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA #--- OF -----,---, 2021

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA FOR THE STATE MANAGEMENT OF MIGRATION

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1. DRAFTING ENTITY

1. The Conceptual framework of the Republic of Armenia for the state management of migration (hereinafter Conceptual framework) has been developed by the Migration Service (hereinafter Service) of the Ministry of Territorial administration and infrastructure of the Republic of Armenia.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. By this Conceptual framework the Government of the Republic of Armenia defines its commitments in the area of migration management, as well as identifies the sectors to establish cooperation with the responsible actors of.

3. The Conceptual framework defines the principles, values, target groups and goals of migration management in the Republic of Armenia.

4. In the area of migration management the Government of the Republic of Armenia is guided by the principles of whole-of-government approach, cooperation and the evidence-based approach. National security and social solidarity, the rights and dignity of all groups of migrants, cultural diversity and enrichment of local culture, as well as mobility and international participation (economic, cultural, public or political involvement in two or more countries) are proclaimed as the values underlying migration management. The main goal of migration policy carried out by the Government is to ensure free and safe movement of people, balancing it with ensuring the country's national security.

5. Based on the current situation in the area of migration and the evaluation of existing issues, as well as forecasts on new migration flows, there are five migration management goals formulated in this Conceptual framework:

- 1) increase interconnections between migration management and policies for the improvement of the demographic situation in the Republic of Armenia, and repatriation;
- 2) increase efficiency in the fight against irregular and illegal migration;
- 3) increase efficiency in management of borders, entry, exit and residence of foreign nationals;
- 4) improve the protection of rights and interests of various migrant groups, improve the system of international protection;

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- 5) reform the organisation of integration of foreign nationals and reintegration of returnees in Armenia, as well as improve the environment for receiving foreign nationals in Armenia;
 - 6) increase the impact of migration on sustainable human development in Armenia;
 - 7) increase the level of preparedness to respond to migration crises;
 - 8) strengthen international and domestic cooperation in the area of migration management;
 - 9) increase the level of coordination, uniformity and effectiveness in the area of migration management.

6. Reforms undertaken in the area of migration management with respect to border management, document security, return and reintegration, fight against trafficking in human beings and organized crime shall contribute to strengthening the relations with the European Union and shall pave the way for the negotiations on visa liberalization. The intended reforms shall also allow for strengthening relations in the framework of the Eurasian Economic Union, facilitating workforce mobility and fostering economic development.

7. The Conceptual framework of the Republic of Armenia for state management of migration has been developed on the basis Armenia's development prospects proclaimed by the Government of the Republic of Armenia and its international commitments.

3. BASELINE SITUATION

8. In the Republic of Armenia, as elsewhere in the world, migration flows increase in activity year over year, whether emigration or immigration flows, voluntary or forced, of foreigners, or compatriots. According to various estimates, in early 1990s Armenia, on one hand, experienced the exodus of about 1,000,000 inhabitants and, on the other, the influx of about 360,000 forced exiles from Azerbaijan. Between 1990s and 2018 (with the exception of one brief period) the outflow of the citizens of the Republic of Armenia maintained itself. In 2020, as in the preceding two years, a positive balance of border crossings, i.e., entries and exits, was registered: about 12,000. Moreover, if in the preceding years the indicator mentioned above was negative for the citizens of the Republic of Armenia and positive for foreign nationals, in 2020 the situation reversed: for Armenian nationals the positive balance was + 42,786, whereas for foreigners it came to -30,693, which is explained by the COVID-19 imposed restrictions. Between 2017-2018 8.9% of Armenia's households had members involved in external and domestic migration processes, accounting for 10.9% of total households. For decades on end seasonal labour migration has prevailed in migration flows originating in Armenia. With every year the number of foreign nationals in Armenia also increases. In 2019 various types of residence status were granted to 7,986 foreign nationals, which is almost 40% more, than the same indicator in 2015. Since 2003 Armenia has also been receiving compatriots who were forced out of foreign countries. Thus, in 2003, because of the war in the Islamic Republic of Iraq, about 1,000 people, mostly of Armenian origin, moved to Armenia and received refugee status. In 2012, as a result of the outbreak of armed clashes in the Syrian Arab Republic, about 20,000 forced migrants of Armenian origin moved to Armenia. In 2014, because of armed conflict in the East of Ukraine, about 200 people received asylum in Armenia, mostly of Armenian origin.

In September of 2020, as a result of the war unleashed by Azerbaijan against the Republic of Artsakh, more than 100,000 of our forcefully displaced compatriots temporarily moved to the Republic of Armenia. Since 2000 there has also been an increasing trend in migration flows to Armenia of returning citizens of the Republic of Armenia who had left before. In the course between 2012-2019, 3,380 readmission applications were received with respect to 6,581 people from EU member states and the Russian Federation, of which the nationality of 5,361 individuals was affirmed. In conditions of the existence of such vast and diverse flows the adoption of a migration management policy is a must.

9. By adopting, in 2000, for the first time the Conceptual framework of the Republic of Armenia for state management of population migration, the Government of the Republic of Armenia laid the foundations for document-based (concept papers, strategies and action plans) management of migration in Armenia. Since 2000 the Government of the Republic of Armenia has adopted four Conceptual frameworks and two Action Plans, which defined the main directions of migration policies, based on the nature of migration processes and fundamental problems existing at the time.

10. Since 1990s the main directions of migration policies of the Republic of Armenia have been: receiving and protecting refugees in the Republic of Armenia, regulation of emigration out of Armenia, protecting the rights of seasonal labour migrants in foreign states, readmission of the citizens of the Republic of Armenia who had departed to foreign states and reintegration of returnees.

11. In the recent years the influx of foreign nationals into Armenia has been increasing, bringing forth the need to formulate new direction of migration policy, in particular, management of incoming flows, integration of foreign nationals, improvement of regulation of residence and work of foreigners. In 2019 the Government of the Republic of Armenia proclaimed the priority goal of reducing demographic risks of the Republic of Armenia, introducing into the migration policy agenda the dimension of managing demographic impacts of migration. Whereas the 2019-2023 Program of the Government of the Republic of Armenia also emphasises the importance of directing migration management to the benefit of the development of the Republic of Armenia. On September 27, 2020, the war unleashed against the Republic of Artsakh and the new coronavirus (COVID-19) resulted in new groups of the forcefully displaced and restrictions in international movement, posing new challenges to migration policies.

12. New agendas of migration management in Armenia are affected not only by developments in migration processes, but also by international cooperation and by Armenia's commitments assumed at international platforms. In particular, this Conceptual framework shall contribute to delivering on Armenia's international commitments assumed under the agreements between Armenia and the European Union on visa facilitation, on readmission of persons residing without authorization; within the framework of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, United Nations Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees, the 1951 Geneva Convention on Refugees and the 1967 Protocol on the status of refugees. During the 70th Session of the UN General Assembly in 2015 the Republic of Armenia acceded to Resolution 70/1, adopting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and committed to implement these by 2030.

The main migration related emphasis in the UN Sustainable Development Goals is in Target 10.7, although migration issues are tangentially raised in almost all of the 17 goals and in many of the 169 targets. The main SDG targets pertaining to migration are the following:

- facilitate orderly, safe, and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies (SDG 10.7);
- protect labor rights and promote safe and secure working environments of all workers, including migrant workers, particularly women migrants, and those in precarious employment (SDG 8.8);
- reduce to less than 3% the transaction costs of migrant remittances and eliminate remittance corridors with costs higher than 5% (SDG 10.c);
- enhance the global partnership for sustainable development mobilizing and sharing knowledge, expertise, technologies and financial resources to support the achievement of sustainable development goals (SDG 17.16), strengthening cooperation with the Diaspora, involving the intellectual potential of the Diaspora in the knowledge-based economy;
- ensure the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status (SDG 17.18), all forms of violence, etc.

13. Having acceded to the Eurasian Economic Union Agreement since 2015, the Republic of Armenia assumed a commitment to become a part of the common labor market on the territory of member states and ensure free movement of the workforce. Accordingly, the member states of the Eurasian Economic Union eased the regulation of employment of member state citizens, waiving for the latter any requirement to possess documents similar to a work permit.

Subsequent processes ensuring the implementation of the Agreement were and are already aiming at overcoming short falls in the enforcement practice by member states of the Agreement provisions, something that impedes with the free movement of the workforce, as well as at the formation of a common labour market. And by signing, in 2017, the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement with the European Union, the Republic of Armenia made the regulation of issues associated with this important international commitment in important part of its migration policy, in particular: the strengthening of border protection and identify verification systems, expanding the fight against irregular migration and trafficking in human beings, reforming visa policies, etc. Since March 1, 2021, with full entry into effect of this Agreement, the Government of the Republic of Armenia has committed to improve domestic legislation pertaining to international protection, keeping in focus the areas of the protection of the rights of admitted persons and issues of their integration, the strengthening of national capacities in migration management, document security, migration information systems, etc.

14. The purpose of the Conceptual framework is bring together in a single document the commitments in the are of migration management, assumed of the Government of the Republic of Armenia, to define the principles of administering the sector and formulate the main directions of migration policy. The migration policy formulated in the Conceptual framework also presents a step forward in launching the visa liberalization dialogue with the European Union.

4. PRINCIPLES AND PRIORITIES OF MIGRATION MANAGEMENT

15. In the area of migration management the Government of the Republic of Armenia abides by three fundamental principles: whole-of-government approach, cooperation and a evidence-based approach.

1) Whole-of-government approach – the management of the migration sector, considering the multifaceted nature of the latter, requires the involvement of a number of public structures (ministries, their subordinate public agencies, etc.) in its administration. The whole-of-government approach implies management of sectoral components of the migration process (administration of state borders, registration of foreign nationals and granting of status, deportation, fight against irregular migration, protection of migrant rights, integration and reintegration support, etc.) through joint and coordinated activities of relevant public bodies.

2) Cooperation – the effective implementation of migration policy requires cooperation between domestic authorities, international inter-governmental, as well as local and international civil society organisation, each of which has their specific role in the management of migration flows and in the work conducted with various migrant groups.

3) Evidence-based approach – the directions of migration policy must be formulated on the basis of study of the needs of migrant groups and the fundamental issues of migration management, and policy decisions shall be made with due consideration of their impact assessment, supported by facts and research data.

16. The following are the values of state management of migration:

1) national security and social solidarity – the migration management policy is in tune with the National security strategy of the Republic of Armenia, adopted in July, 2020, posing no challenges to social cohesion in Armenia.

2) rights and dignity of all groups of migrants - the policy of state management of migration guarantees the protection of the rights and dignity of all groups of migrants.

3) conciliation of cultural diversity and civic values – the framework of state management of migration encourages the introduction of new cultural elements to Armenia by foreign nationals, returnees and repatriants, and the enrichment and promotion of local cultures in this context. Cultural diversity is encouraged within the framework of civil society and supremacy of democratic values, and in compliance with constitutional order.

4) mobility and international participation (economic, cultural, public or political involvement in two or more countries) - state management of migration recognizes and values the need for mobility of people in the contemporary world, as well as for international participation: economic, cultural, public or political involvement in two or more countries. Said priority of migration policy is expedient especially considering the existence of the Armenian Diaspora, the long-standing viability of Armenians in numerous states, and the vision of strengthening links with compatriots in the Diaspora.

17. The priorities mentioned above are prominent in the context of the goals pertaining to the migration sector, enshrined in the 2019-2023 Plan of the Government of the Republic of Armenia, approved by the Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Armenia # 650-L of May 06, 2019 (in particular, ensuring free and safe movement of people, balancing it with ensuring the country's national security).

5. TARGET GROUPS OF THE POLICY FOR STATE MANAGEMENT OF MIGRATION

18. Taking into account Armenia's current and expected migration flows, the needs of various migrant groups and the imperative of the targeted nature of migration flows management, eight target groups have been defined in the Conceptual framework, on the basis of the 'Glossary of migration terms' by the International Organization of Migration, the Law of the Republic of Armenia 'On foreign nationals' and the Law of the Republic of Armenia 'On refugees and asylum.'

1) foreign nationals – persons not considered to be citizens of the Republic of Armenia, who possess citizenship of another state (foreign citizens) or do not possess citizenship of any state (stateless persons), and who have moved to Armenia for the purposes of residence, work, education, or other purposes.

2) returnees - citizens of the Republic of Armenia and their family members, who, having departed to a foreign state to settle, either permanently or temporarily (irrespective of the purpose of migration, whether for purposes of residence, work, protection, etc.), have subsequently returned to Armenia. The term 'returnee' is not juridical. As a result of lack of its definition in the legislation, it is subject to clarification on a programmatic level.

3) repatriates – foreign or dual nationals of Armenian ethnic origin, who have resettled in Armenia. The term 'repatriate' is not juridical, since it so far lacks definition in the legislation. Taking into account, that the draft law of the Republic of Armenia 'On Repatriation' is in the pipeline, the group of repatriates has been defined as broadly as possible, on the assumption that there will be a need to tweak the definition of the repatriates group, once the law of the Republic of Armenia 'On Repatriation' is adopted.

4) internally displaced persons – persons or groups of persons, who were forced or bound to flee or abandon their homes or habitual residences, in particular, because of armed clashes, situations of widespread violence, violations of human rights or man-made or natural disasters, or to avoid the consequence thereof, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border.

5) asylum seekers – persons who seek in Armenia protection from persecution or grave danger in their country of permanent residence, and are awaiting a decision with respect to their application, on the basis of relevant international and national instruments, to be granted refugee status.

6) refugees – foreign nationals or stateless persons officially recognized as refugees by Armenia on the basis of their well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of appurtenance to a particular race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, or granted protection in their country of citizenship (in case of stateless persons, in their former habitual residence) from widespread violence, external aggression, internal conflict, mass violations of human rights or other grave transgressions of public order.

7) forcefully displaced persons – de facto refugees in their social status, who nevertheless lack legal justification to apply for a refugee status (e.g. Syrian-Armenians who have received citizenship of the Republic of Armenia, persons who have moved to Armenia from the Republic of Artsakh).

8) emigrants – citizens of the Republic of Armenia who have departed from Armenia for education, work or residence purposes.

6. FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES AND SOLUTIONS PROPOSED

19. There exist a number of issues in the area of migration management, part of which is determined by the emergence on new migration flows, and another part by gaps in the management itself. These fundamental issues may be divided into four groups.

1) insufficient management of migration determined demographic challenges – although Armenia for decades on end has registered a migration-determined shrinking of its population, overcoming this issue has never been on migration policy agenda, since its resolution mostly lies in the area of other sectoral policies. The problem is flagged within this Conceptual framework, requiring intensification of interaction between relevant sectoral policies.

2) lack of services geared towards the needs of certain migrant groups – Armenia, having been for decades on end predominantly a migration source country, is not fully prepared in its migration policy for the inflow of foreign nationals. In particular, there are quite a few gaps in the dimensions of regulation and control of inflow of foreign nationals, efficiency of the fight against irregular migration, as well as the full regulation of labour activity of foreign nationals. Another important fundamental issue is the lack of services and regulations by the state, aiming at satisfying the needs of returning citizens of the Republic of Armenia, internally displaced persons, forcefully displaced persons.

3) shortfalls in the efficacy of organisation, completeness and delivery quality of services – the improvement of services oriented towards various migrant groups notwithstanding, the issue of increasing their effectiveness and quality is still on the agenda. Efforts are still required along reforming the management of the borders of the Republic of Armenia, the areas of exit, entry and residence, protection of the rights and integration and reintegration of various groups of migrants.

4) gaps in the preparedness to respond to migration crises – preparedness for emergency management of migration, perhaps, is one of the biggest gaps in migration management. As demonstrated by the challenges that emerged in fundamental issues of managing and providing support to the forcefully displaced, who arrived in Armenia as a result of the war unleashed by the Republic of Azerbaijan against the Republic of Artsakh on September 27, 2020, as well as in responding to restrictions of international movement caused by the new coronavirus type of infection (COVID-19), emergency management of migration is strictly necessary not only to respond to an already existing situation, but also to prepare for anticipated new challenges.

20. The fundamental issues listed above are largely determined by the following:

1) gaps in the integration and coordination of management, i.e. the implementation of migration related functions by more than one structures and insufficient level of coordination between various management links.

2) lack of capacity, i.e. the need for expanding existing infrastructure, human resources, skills, forecasting, planning and rapid response in the area of migration, other capacities, as well as international cooperation.

21. As a solution it is necessary, on the one hand, to take steps to overcome the difficulties mentioned and, on the other, in the direction of eliminating their causes (gaps in the integration and coordination of management and lack of capacity). In particular: firstly, the consolidation in one public agency of the management of all functions pertaining to foreign nationals would be an important step towards overcoming gaps in uniformity of management and coordination and the fundamental issues determined thereby.

Secondly, the establishment of knowledge and experience accumulation mechanisms, continual trainings, expanding international cooperation, and infrastructural and technical saturation of entities implementing migration policy are important for the organization of migration management and improvement of the quality of services rendered. Thirdly, an increase in the introduction of research-based and evidence-based forecasts in the development and implementation of migration policies, in planning and preparedness for situations of crises would constitute most important steps in reforming state management of migration.

7. STRATEGIC GOALS AND DIRECTIONS OF MIGRATION POLICY

22. Migration management of the Republic of Armenia aims at 9 strategic goals of migration policy formulated in this Conceptual framework, which emanate from the current state of the migration sector and the existing fundamental issues, as well as from forecasts of new migration flows.

1) Increasing interconnections between migration management and the improvement of the demographic situation on the Republic of Armenia and repatriation policies

For decades on end the stable outflow of the population of the Republic of Armenia to foreign countries has been a major challenge for the demographics of the Republic of Armenia. Although there were references to the impact of migration on the demographic situation the migration policy documents of the Republic of Armenia, the management of such impact was never formulated as a goal of migration policies. Taking into account the commitment of the Government of the Republic of Armenia to overcome Armenia's demographic challenges, this Conceptual framework also enshrines as a goal a management of migration flows that will support the improvement of Armenia's demographic situation. The following are the directions emanating from the goal of increasing interconnections between migration management and the improvement of the demographic situation.

a. encouragement of return and repatriation

Encouragement of return at the phase of migration originating in Armenia, as well as encouragement of repatriation from the Diaspora, both on the level of discourse and practice.

b. assessment of the required volume of immigration flow and stimulation of flows deemed to be expedient

Assessment of the desired volume and composition (demographics, professional qualifications, etc.) of inflow based on the demographic challenges of the Republic of Armenia, the structure of its labour market, and other socio-economic needs.

Development and implementation of strategies to attract desirable immigration flows and respective programs from the perspective of the vision for the development of the Republic of Armenia and overcoming its demographic challenges.

c. assessment of the outflow impact and reduction of target groups outflow

Impact assessment of the flow out of Armenia of various demographic and educational/professional groups, and development and implementation of deliberate programs in the direction of reducing target groups outflow (linking such reduction not only with the country's overall reforms and improvement of macroeconomic indicators, but also the development of local environments (individual villages and towns)).

2) Increasing the effectiveness of the fight against irregular and illegal migration

The lawfulness and regulated nature of migration flows in and out of Armenia is an important prerequisite for effective implementation of migration management policies, ensuring the country's security, protection of migrant rights, as well as for efficient and reliable cooperation with foreign countries. In the area of state management of migration in the Republic of Armenia continual importance has been assigned to the fight against irregular and illegal migration, although with a prevalent emphasis on reducing irregular migration originating in Armenia. To accomplish this, information campaigns were organized promoting lawful migration, and in 2014 the organization of illegal migration was criminalized, improvements were introduced in the process of readmission of citizens of the Republic of Armenia residing abroad without authorization, etc. Although these steps represent significant achievement, nevertheless there is remains quite a lot to be done in the direction of preventing irregular and illegal migration originating in Armenia. Along with the increase of immigration flows in Armenia, the risks associated with irregular and illegal influx, residence and employment of foreign nationals have also increased.

The biggest challenge of the regular residence of foreign nationals is associated with the gaps in the system of their registration. As for the employment of foreign nationals, in Armenia it is regulated through the institution of a work permit, valuing the protection of the local workforce. Nevertheless, although certain instruments addressing this issue do exist in the legislative framework regulating this area, the sector is not fully regulated, due to existing gaps in institutional systems and procedures. These shortfalls create significant prerequisites for de facto unregulated employment of foreign nationals. Reforms in the direction of ensuring the regulated nature of employment and residence of foreign nationals in Armenia, as well as of preventing irregular migration originating in Armenia, are necessary for the protection of the rights of foreigners in Armenia and of citizens of the Republic of Armenia abroad, for the protection of the local workforce, for ensuring a receptive environment in Armenia for foreign nationals, as well as to support the visa liberalization process with the European Union. At the same time, ensuring the regulated nature of employment and residence of foreign nationals in Armenia, as well as the protection of rights and securing a receptive environment may become a stimulus for business development. The following are the directions emanating from the goal of fighting irregular and illegal migration:

a. prevention of illegal border crossings

Increasing the capacity to detect forged documents, introduction of effective data exchange systems with the databases of various local and international structures (Border Guard Troops of the National Security Service of the Republic of Armenia, Interpol, etc), increasing the capacity of migrant identification, improving the equipment and information technology infrastructure, reducing the number of inadequately controlled green border segments, at the same time ensuring entry systems that are sensitized to protection issues of persons in need of international protection.

b. improvement of systems for the registration of residence of foreign nationals and the regulation there of

Consolidation of databases which exist in Armenia on migration flows and migrant groups (namely, the Border Management Information System (BMIS) and the State population registry), improvement of mechanisms for re-registration and updating data in foreigners registration systems, defining the term 'irregular residence' and introduction of an indicator 'irregular residence' in migrant registry databases, regular exchange of irregular migrant data collected in databases between public agencies, in a procedure and in cases stipulated by law.

c. effective and humane management of irregular migration cases

In the event of detecting irregular residence and irregular employment of foreign nationals, introduction of an effective, humane case management mechanisms, respecting human rights and dignity, establishing an up-to-international-standards temporary shelter for irregular foreign nationals who reside and work in Armenia, effective organization of the process of return to the country of origin for persons who have no legal grounds for being in Armenia, including the organization of a dignified deportation procedure that does not trample on human rights, development of programs and mechanisms of voluntary return from Armenia.

d. strengthening supervision over private employment agencies

Strengthening state supervision over the operation of organisations, including foreign, as well as individuals and groups of individuals that recruit workforce and export it from Armenia and/or import it into Armenia.

e. fight against trafficking in human beings and their exploitation

Improvement of mechanisms for the prevention of trafficking in human beings and their exploitation; for detection, referral, identification, protection and social reintegration of trafficked and exploited persons, as well as expansion of support to victims.

f. reduction of irregular migration originating in Armenia

Increasing awareness of consequences and risks of irregular migration, advocacy for safe, regular and secure migration, informing the citizens of the Republic of Armenia about legitimate employment opportunities abroad.

g. fight against forging visas and documents in Armenia

Managing the risks of identity theft through lost or stolen documents, closer cooperation with the embassies of foreign states in Armenia in the direction of verifying visas and passports, as well as and detecting forgeries.

3) Increasing efficiency in management of borders, entry, exit and the residence of foreign nationals

The management of borders, of entry, exit and the residence of foreign nationals is a primary prerequisite for regular migration ensuring the freedom of movement. Ascribing importance to efficient management of state borders, the Government of the Republic of Armenia, in cooperation with international partners, within the framework of Protocol Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Armenia # N14, passed at its session on 06 April, 2017, 'On approving the 2017-2021 program of measures aimed at ensuring border security of the Republic of Armenia and integrated management of the state border,' has implemented a number of activities, aiming at reforming the systems of management of the state border of the Republic of Armenia, training the personnel and technological saturation. These important stapes notwithstanding, from the perspective of effective management of migration flows, certain components of border management (namely, identification systems, issuance of biometric passports, technical equipment of border crossing points, etc.) are still in need of strengthening. In recent years, with the purpose of developing tourism and encouraging investment, efforts were exerted in Armenia also with respect to increasing the flexibility of visa policies and the efficiency of the process of visa issuance.

Today foreign nationals may acquire entry visas to the Republic of Armenia online (through the e-visa electronic visa portal), through diplomatic representations and consular offices of the Republic of Armenia in foreign countries, as well as at the border crossing points of the Republic of Armenia). Notwithstanding the improvements, from the perspective of developing tourism and encouraging investment, in visa policies and visa issuance processes, the sector still needs improvement from the viewpoint of effective management of migration flows. The following are the directions emanating from the goal of increasing the transparency and efficiency of management of borders, of entry, exit and the residence of foreign nationals:

a. improving systems for identification of persons at the border

Issuance to the citizens of the Republic of Armenia, foreign nationals authorized to reside in the Republic of Armenia, refugees and stateless persons of travel documents containing biometric data, in compliance with the standards of International Organisation of Civil Aviation (ICAO), introduction at border crossing points of information and communication technologies for reading and registering biometric data (fingerprints and/or facial features).

b. improving the process of handing over persons at border crossing points onto the jurisdiction of other structures

Clarification and improvement of the process of handing over to the care/jurisdiction of respective structures of asylum seekers, unaccompanied minors crossing the border, and persons with health needs/risks, increasing financial and technical capacities of relevant structures to receive such persons.

c. review of functionalities of the BMIS from the viewpoint of management of migration flows and taking full advantage thereof

Evaluate, from the viewpoint of management of migration flows, the need of relevant public agencies for statistical and personal data, and the possibility to acquire it through the BMIS. Take steps towards ensuring full-fledged use of the functionalities of the BMIS system.

d. capacity building for the staff of the border guards service

Develop capacity of the staff of the border guards service to respond to migration flows, along other dimensions of migration management, such as the institute of asylum, cultural and gender sensitivity, etc.

e. introduction of migration management agenda into the process of review of visa policies

The review of visa policies is currently guided by the vision of promoting tourism and investment. It is necessary to also include in this process preconditions emanating from the migration management agenda.

f. improving the policy of issuance and extension of entry visas to the Republic of Armenia

Implement legislative improvements and clarification of procedures from the perspective of migration flows management, increase the efficiency and coordination of the policy for issuance and extension of entry visas.

g. improving the system of granting residence status

Clarify the grounds for granting, extension and withdrawal of residence status, expediting and simplifying procedures for granting residence status. Include the dimensions of education and research in the grounds for granting residence status.

h. increasing access to information

Ensuring, whether in Armenia or abroad, access to information on the procedure and conditions for entering Armenia, residence and employment therein, targeted dissemination of relevant information.

i. improving the processes of readmission and return in Armenia

Exert efforts to develop return procedures and mechanisms, clarify the functions of public agencies involved in the process and improve their coordination. Provide help and support for voluntary return of asylum seekers, refugees and other forcefully displaced people.

j. improving the processes of deportation

Expanding financial and infrastructural (namely, with respect to temporary shelter) capacity for organizing deportation, organizing a dignified deportation procedure that does not trample on rights, introducing programs for encouraging and organizing voluntary return of foreign nationals from Armenia.

4) Improvement of the protection of the rights and interests of various migrant groups, improvement of the system of international protection

Since 2000s the protection of the rights of various migrant groups moving in and out of Armenia has been one of the key axes of state migration policy. A number of actions have been undertaken in this direction, information campaigns on the rights were organized, agreements offering the possibility of legal labour migration have been concluded with certain organisations that engage in attracting workforce onto foreign states, a number of international treaties and memoranda have been signed on cooperation around the fight against irregular migration, etc. These efforts notwithstanding, there exist numerous gaps in the area of protection of rights and interests of migrants. The infringement of the rights and interests of labour migrants departing Armenia has not been overcome, because of limited possibilities of getting involved in problems within foreign countries and for other reasons. The protection of the labour and other rights of foreign nationals in Armenia is pretty weak, since mechanisms for regulating employment and its supervision are not fully in place. Certain migrant groups (namely, internally displaced persons and forcefully displaced persons, who are not eligible to apply for refugee status) have dropped out of the migration policy framework as targets of migration policy. These gaps notwithstanding, one may still acknowledge a number of important accomplishments in the area of protection of rights and interests of various migrant groups.

The protection of the rights of target groups of state migration policy in the Republic of Armenia is one of the important dimensions of the work of the office of the Human Rights Defender. The office of the Human Rights Defender carries out monitoring of the legislation and practice in the sector, conducts analysis and submits improvement recommendations to relevant structures, responds to personal complaints of individual representatives of target groups and, within its powers, takes other steps in the direction of increasing the level of the protection of human rights of the said target groups. One of the most mature directions of state management of migration is the protection of asylum seekers and refugees. In late 1980s, having encountered the fundamental issue of protecting the refugees forcefully exiled from Azerbaijan, Armenia over the course of years developed the necessary legislative and institutional mechanisms necessary for the protection of asylum seekers and refugees. Traditions of cooperation with international organisations have emerged, as well as stable practices of enforcement of international conventions. One of the achievements of the sector was the adoption in 2015 of the law on amending the Law of the Republic of Armenia 'On refugees and asylum seekers,' which approximated to a larger degree the protection of rights and interests of refugees and asylum seekers in Armenia with the criteria accepted in the European Union. In 2019 the Government of the Republic of Armenia passed a decision to issue apartment purchase vouchers to 112 families who had been forcefully exiled from Azerbaijan and put up in temporary accommodation in the city of Yerevan, 185 families more received these vouchers in 2020. It is intended to implement the second phase of this program in 2021, which shall resolve the issue of the remaining 250 beneficiary families of this program, who had been forcefully exiled from Azerbaijan.

These achievements notwithstanding, along with the changes in situation, new needs in the area of international protection keep appearing in Armenia: of new knowledge, mechanisms to acquire information and train the personnel, legislative improvements to respond to new fundamental issues, creation of new mechanisms and toolkits, attraction additional resources, etc. In 2020, as a result of the war unleashed against the Republic of Artsakh, a new group of the forcefully displaced appeared in Armenia, the protection of the rights and interests of which presented a challenge also for migration policies, along with other sectors. The restrictions of movement caused by the new coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19), which resulted in economic, social and a number of other fundamental issues for seasonal labour migrants out of Armenia, their families, as well as for foreigners who had stayed in Armenia, presented new challenges in the area of migration management. The following are the directions emanating from the goal of improving the protection of the rights and interests of various migrant groups, improving the system of international protection:

a. improving the protection of the rights and interests of the citizens of the Republic of Armenia in foreign countries

Strengthen the protection of the rights and interests of the citizens of the Republic of Armenia leaving for foreign states with the purpose of seeking asylum, as well as of those working and residing in foreign countries (especially seasonal labour migrants in the Russian Federation, labour migrant in Turkey), and of other migrant groups, citizens of the Republic of Armenia, through increasing awareness, mechanisms of cooperation with human rights organisations in foreign states and through other mechanisms for the protection of the rights and interests.

b. Protection of social and health status of the citizens of the Republic of Armenia in foreign states

Expand cooperation around social protection in foreign states of migrants, citizens of the Republic of Armenia, protection of their health (ensuring continuity of medical treatment, access to medication provided by the Republic of Armenia to its citizens, etc). Ensuring transferability of pension benefits for foreign nationals in Armenia and for citizens of the Republic of Armenia in foreign countries.

c. Improving the protection of the rights of migrants in the Republic of Armenia

Fight against discrimination and violation of human rights of various migrant groups in Armenia's educational, health and other institutions, improving the protection of labour and other (migrant status determined) rights of migrants.

d. Improving the existing regulation of employment of foreign nationals in Armenia

Increase the effectiveness of regulation of labour activity of foreign nationals in Armenia and of management of labour immigration, ascribing importance to prioritizing the local workforce and protecting the labour and human rights of foreign nationals.

e. legal and social protection of internally displaced persons and forcefully displaced persons (who are not eligible to apply for refugee status, namely citizens of the Republic of Armenia who had moved from Syria, persons who have moved to Armenia from the Republic of Artsakh)

Creation, within the framework of sectoral policies (social security, health support), of legal grounds for the protection of the rights and interests of these groups and introduction of programs aiming at the protection of their rights and interests.

f. improvement of the system of international protection

Improvement of the existing legislation of the Republic of Armenia on asylum seekers, refugees and stateless persons, raising the qualifications and continual training of public agencies staff involved in the process of processing applications for and granting asylum; strengthening infrastructural and other capacities; improvement of mechanisms for acquiring data on asylum seekers and their countries of origin; providing temporary shelter to the needy groups of asylum seekers, refugees and people in refugee situation, and improvement of conditions in such shelters; strengthening of legal and socio-economic protection of asylum seekers, refugees and other forcefully displaced persons; protection of refugees and exploration of additional ways to resolve their problems; improvement of the practice of enforcement of legislation to seek asylum at border crossing points.

g. strengthening quality control over and effectiveness of asylum procedures

Introducing coordinated and objective mechanisms of personal quality control and performance improvement indicators, which shall enable effective identification of gaps and problems existing at every stage of asylum procedure and timely rectification thereof. Transition from the traditional linear approach to management of individual asylum applications to a more strategic and differentiated approach, basing the process or solution on an analysis of the person in question or of the needs of protecting the population.

5) reforming the organisation of integration of foreign nationals and reintegration of returnees in Armenia, as well as improving the environment for receiving foreigners in Armenia

The absence of a comprehensive integration policy notwithstanding, the Government of the Republic of Armenia, in cooperation with international structures, has continually attempted, inasmuch as possible, to support the integration of refugees who had been granted protection in Armenia.

In the 2010s, along with new flows of refugees and asylum seekers, support to integration expanded and became better regulated. And in 2016, for the first time, the formulation of a concise integration policy was initiated in a single document. As a result, the Government of the Republic of Armenia approved the 'Conceptual framework for the integration of persons recognized as refugees and granted asylum in the Republic of Armenia, as well as of long-term migrants' and the Action plan for its implementation. Although this document set the foundations for the formation of a tradition of comprehensive policies for integration management in Armenia, it contains a number of gaps. In particular, Conceptual framework and its Action plan do not cover all groups requiring integration and does not respond to all of their needs. The following are the directions emanating from reforming the organisation of integration of foreign nationals and reintegration of returnees in Armenia, as well as improving the environment for receiving foreigners in Armenia:

a. increasing access to education, health and social support, and the protection of rights

Ensuring equitable access to education, health and, for the needy groups, social support for foreign nationals granted protection or any right of residence (residence status) in the Republic of Armenia, and for returning citizens of the Republic of Armenia.

b. cultural integration

Increasing command of the Armenian language, knowledge about culture and public life, increasing the sense of belonging as well as respect towards the laws of the land, resolutions, traditions of the society, public authorities.

c. reforming civic integration

Reforming the legislation, processes and institutions of naturalization, ensuring simplified procedures within the framework of repatriation policies, encouraging civic participation.

d. support to employment and economic integration

Support to employment and economic inclusion for the target groups of the Conceptual framework, reduction of risks and challenges associated with migrant status.

e. establishment of a receptive and hospitable environment in Armenia

Increasing tolerance within the society, reducing hate speech and preventing discrimination, increasing public awareness of the daily lives, fundamental issues and respective cultures of foreign nationals residing in Armenia, intensifying cooperation between local communities and the target groups and organisations of the Conceptual framework.

6) Increasing the impact of migration on sustainable human development in Armenia

The connection between migration and development has been sufficiently discussed in the world, as well as in Armenia. In 2009 the Annual report of the United Nations was devoted to the subject of 'Migration and Development.' It touches upon the impact of migration (including seasonal) originating in Armenia on Armenia's human development, namely on the increase of other opportunities that determine education, health and the overall quality of life for migrants and their families. Since 2017 the approach 'migration and development' was also introduced into the field of migration policy. In the '2017-2021 Migration Policy Strategy of the Republic of Armenia' the Government of the Republic of Armenia, having formulated migration for development as a stand-alone goal, responded to the need for taking advantage of migrant potential, contributing to framework migration and the mobilization of the investment potential of migrants. In 2019 in some communities of Armenia courses were offered with a view to raise the financial literacy of emigrants (labour migrants) and their family members. These steps notwithstanding, there still remains a lot of work to do to put migration to the service of Armenia's human development. The following are the directions emanating from the goal of increasing the impact of migration on sustainable human development in Armenia:

a. prevention of the brain drain and reduction of target groups outflow

Taking steps to prevent brain drain, reduce emigration flows undesirable from the perspective of Armenia's sustainable human development.

b. stimulation of migration for the purpose of education and exchange of experience

Stimulating and expanding migration opportunities among students, scientists and broader spectrum of professionals with the purpose of education and exchange of experience.

c. reduction of labour migration

Reducing involvement in seasonal migration of youth in communities with tradition of migrating. Studies have demonstrated that communities with tradition of seasonal migration the youth depart not solely motivated by economic rationale, but also by the momentum of migration tradition. Although in these communities migration does contribute to financial stability of families and the community, it still leads to a number of other psychological, health, cultural and political challenges, which impede with human development in the communities. Therefore, it is necessary to undertake certain steps directed at the reduction of seasonal labour migration, to overcome the challenges caused thereby.

d. reduction of the negative impact of migration and decreasing risks thereof, creation of alternatives to traditional formats and directions (Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS))

Reduce the negative impact of migration on seasonal labour migrants and their families, including also decreasing migration-caused health challenges (in particular, reduction of HIV/AIDS incidence among seasonal labour migrants). Alternatives to traditional destinations (towards CIS countries), expanding opportunities for destinations that ensure more conducive situations (as opposed to currently prevailing situation of fragmentation of migrants' families, extended absence of men in the communities, etc.) from the perspective of development.

e. revealing the intellectual and economic potential of migrants and the Diaspora, and introducing mechanisms to apply said potential to Armenia's sustainable human development

Create mechanisms to identify and take advantage of knowledge, skills, links and networks, expand possibilities for various migrant groups to transport their moveable property to Armenia, ensure the accessibility of systems for the transfer of funds, review legislative regulation of real estate purchase by foreign nationals, based on Armenia's security and development prospects.

f. steering remittances received from abroad towards development

Introduce effective programs for steering financial remittances of migrants towards human development and community development, encourage the investment of remittances, raise the financial literacy of labour migrants and their family members, citizens of the Republic of Armenia.

g. fostering closer relations with the Armenian communities in foreign countries

Strengthen formal and informal associations of current and former citizens of the Republic of Armenia in foreign countries, stimulate the emergence of new associations and networks, strengthen existing mechanisms of links with them and form new mechanisms, increase awareness about Armenia among compatriots outside of Armenia, create innovative and effective systems for dissemination of information.

h. stimulating international participation

Formation of mechanisms and opportunities for migrants and Diaspora representatives, while in foreign countries, to participate in Armenia's economic, educational, political and other processes.

7) Increasing the level of preparedness to respond to migration crises

Armenia, like its neighbouring states in the Caucasus and the Near East, is in a region prone to natural and man-made disasters, including the risks of earthquakes and armed conflicts. Expert assessment of developments in the Near East countries forecast a major risk of mass movement of people determined by deepening crises and conflicts. Taking into account the existence of the Armenian Diaspora in these countries, Armenia may encounter the problem of receiving a mass influx of forced migrants. Therefore, one of the most urgent issues of migration policy is preparedness for this eventuality. The management of mass influx caused by force majeure circumstances requires special mobilization of resources and system of management, preparedness for which implies a plan of actions geared for such cases, mobilization mechanisms, the existence of infrastructure and special preparedness of employees of public agencies. The Government of the Republic of Armenia, ascribing importance to the preparedness to respond to migration crises, has initiated the development of a 'Action plan for the management of migration flows resulting from a disaster of armed actions.' Tabletop military command exercises, regularly conducted in the Republic of Armenia, also involve a scenario of a mass influx of refugees, and this contributes to the preparedness of the employees of public agencies. These steps notwithstanding, there still exist serious gaps the level of preparedness in Armenia to respond to migration crises, and overcoming these gaps is extremely urgent. The steps aiming to respond to the mass influx of forcefully exiled persons in the result of war unleashed by the republic of Azerbaijan against the Republic of Artsakh on September 27, 2020, as well aiming to restrict international movement, caused by the new coronavirus type of infection (COVID-19), accumulated a certain experience for the policy of responding to migration crises. The evaluation of this experience and the processing of the lessons learned may serve as a good foundation for research-based forecasts in the migration sector, for planning actions and for the development of institutions of crisis response.

The following are the directions emanating from the goal of increasing preparedness to respond to migration crises:

a. creation of a system for emergency management of migration

Establish a body for the coordination of emergency management, formation of institutional mechanisms to coordinate efforts, as well of cooperation with international partners.

b. emergency management of borders

Develop capacity of border troops personnel to operate in conditions of crisis, provide human and technical capacity to receive mass flows.

c. creation of flexible systems for international protection of migration

Create rapid and flexible mechanisms for accepting and considering group asylum applications.

d. creation of mechanisms for statistical accounting, monitoring and bilateral transfer of information

Registration of inflows, efficient collection of statistical data, formulation of mechanisms for monitoring patterns of composition of displaced groups (locally and in transit), their needs, of the situation, and for planning interventions, as well as formation of a system for bilateral exchange of information between the government, humanitarian entities and persons in situations of crisis, aiming at satisfying the need for information of persons in situations of crisis and enduring their feedback.

e. creation of systems for documenting, registering and referral of displaced persons

Create mechanisms for registering and referral of persons arriving during mass influx with incomplete documents.

f. ensuring infrastructure

Resolve, during mass influx, the issue of providing the necessary temporary shelter/tents, means of communication and telecommunication, utility services and other infrastructure.

g. creation of mechanisms for ensuring the security of persons and for providing emergency support

Take measures to ensure the security of persons and reducing the risks of violence and trampling on rights, provide persons in situations of crisis with humanitarian, health (formation of a system for the provision of comprehensive medical and preventive services during the course of the crisis and in transit), social, information, psychological and other assistance, directed at overcoming the crisis. For the population afflicted by an emergency situation: ensure clear, targeted and effective communication and accountability, including quality translation and interpretation, quality and knowledgeable human resources, in order to respond to the immediate protection needs of persons with special requirements in emergency situations.

h. managing restrictions of international movement

Manage restrictions of movement of citizens of the Republic of Armenia moving to Armenia, citizens of the Republic of Armenia needing to leave Armenia, and of foreign nationals, mitigating resulting social and economic consequences.

i. expanding international cooperation around crisis management of mass influx

Expand cooperation and mutual assistance practice with other states and international structures in the direction of overcoming crises.

j. allocation of sustainable finances

During mass inflow allocate the necessary funding for catering to immediate needs of the forcefully displaced, establish mechanisms for fundraising.

8) Strengthening international and domestic cooperation in the area of migration management

As a multifaceted sector, migration management implies close cooperation with various bodies, international structures and civil society organisations. In this respect the Republic of Armenia has quite auspicious traditions.

Through various formats and platforms, the Migration Service of the Republic of Armenia maintains close cooperation with numerous organisations associated with migration policies. International organisations have a great contribution especially to expert and advisory support necessary for the management of the sector, as well as to providing financial means. The role of civil society organisations is great especially in the area of providing services. Long standing cooperation traditions notwithstanding, there still remains a lot to do to involve cooperation partners, increase the Republic of Armenia's role in cooperation therewith, to exchange experiences, negotiate the national agenda, and along other dimensions. The following are the directions emanating from the goal of strengthening international and domestic cooperation in the area of migration management:

a. expanding regional and global cooperation

Expanding cooperation onto the management of mass inflow of forced migrants, visa liberalisation, labour migration, protection of the rights of the migrants and other directions.

b. closer bilateral cooperation

Ensure closer bilateral cooperation with the countries that receive emigrants from Armenia and send migrants to Armenia, with the purpose of jointly resolving common fundamental problems and overcome risks (of irregular migration, trafficking, health, etc.) conduct negotiations, with a view of signing readmission agreements, with the countries sending (de facto and potentially) migrants to Armenia.

c. expanding cooperation with public administration structures

Improve mechanisms for cooperation, data exchange and referrals between public administration structures playing a role in migration management, introduce the whole-of-government approach to the management of mass inflows, ensure interlinkage between migration-related and other sectoral policies.

d. strengthening participation of international organisations and civil society structures of the Republic of Armenia

Introduce effective mechanisms for the involvement in the formulation and implementation of migration policies of international structures and local civil society organisations (also including various associations and representative organisations of migrant groups) relevant to migration management.

e. raising Armenia's role within international platforms

Raise Armenia's role within international platforms of migration management and promote national agendas.

9) Increasing the level of coordination, uniformity and effectiveness in the area of migration management

Since early years of their formation, migration management policy and institutional structure have undergone significant transformation, reflecting changes in Armenia's migration situation. Continually dynamic situation and the revaluation of the domestic and international priorities of migration policy to this day keep the issue of reforming and raising the effectiveness of the state system of migration management topical to this day. Having expanded the framework of management and adjusted to situational challenges through the course of decades, the current institutional system of migration management still has a number of gaps. Because of the distribution of migration-related functions between various bodies of public authority (the Ministries of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure, of Foreign affairs, of Labour and Social Affairs, the Police, and the National Security Service), the efficiency and integration of management of the migration sector diminishes, coordination of actions becomes complicated. As a result of fragmented management of the various links in the migration chain, foreign nationals and other beneficiaries of the sector have to deal with a number of disparate institutions.

This slows down the process of service provision, increases the overlap of activities, results in complications of data compatibility and database synchronization, as well as difficulties in identification of persons and cases. In order to overcome these gaps and with the purpose of increasing migration management effectiveness and comprehensiveness, the management of migration needs to be centralized in a single structure, adopting an integrated approach towards the management of all components of the migration chain. From the perspective of raising migration management effectiveness, it is also important to improve the systems and procedures for the collection of sectoral statistics. Certain directions of migration management today are being formed as a situational response, rather than an institutional policy, backed by the necessary mechanisms and methodology (e.g., receiving and integrating Syrian Armenians). Certain components of migration management are being formed in conditions of scarcity of statistical inputs, incompatibility of existing databases, and absence of a full analysis of the situation (e.g., management of foreign nationals' employment). Overcoming these challenges is an important prerequisite to make the development of migration policy evidence-based, formulating policy directions on the basis of multidimensional analysis of the situation and forecasts, as well as to reduce the negative and multiply the positive impact of migration processes. The following are the directions emanating from the goal of increasing coordination, comprehensiveness and efficiency of migration management:

a. creation of institutional foundations for comprehensive management of migration

Centralize in one public agency all functions pertaining to foreign nationals.

b. increasingly evidence-based formation and implementation of migration policy

In particular:

1) improve maintaining statistics on migration flows and migration processes, catering to the needs of policy development (in particular, disaggregated by various features) and arriving at conformity thereof with the standards of the European Union and the Eurasian Economic Union.

2) strengthen policy research and expert assessment capacity, in particular directed at the study of immigration flows, evaluating trends and making forecasts, their impact on the processes underway in the Republic of Armenia, on the rates of outflow and inflow, study, evaluate and forecast the impact of various migration flows on Armenia's demographic dynamics.

c. increasing the efficiency of evaluation of migration policy results and impacts

d. improving the quality and increasing access to public services provided to various migrant groups

In particular:

1) raise the effectiveness and the quality, as well as access to shelter, educational, health, legal, information, international protection, granting residence status, and other services provided to various migrant groups.

2) introduce a mechanism for responding and finding solutions to fundamental issues that arise during the provision of services.

3) reforming accountability mechanisms.

e. migration management capacity building

In particular:

1) raising the qualifications and continual training of public agencies staff involved in the process of migration management.

2) providing state structures with respective infrastructure, as well as information, communication and other necessary technologies.

3) evaluation and accumulation of experience formed in Armenia, ensuring transferability thereof.

4) expansion of experience exchange with other states and structures.

f. introduction of internal migration into migration management policy agenda

Create an effective system for tracking internal migration. Evaluate demographic challenges determined by internal migration, and development of ways to overcome them.

g. creation of mechanisms for ensuring availability of stable financial resources

Create mechanisms for ensuring the raising of stable financial resources (appropriations from the state budget of the Republic of Armenia and other sources not prohibited by law) necessary for the implementation of actions envisaged within the framework of state management of migration.

8. EXPECTED RESULTS

23. The Conceptual framework, as the fundamental and comprehensive document of the migration policy of the Republic of Armenia, shall provide the basis for the development of four corresponding programs on:

- regulation of integration and reintegration issues;
- management of migration flows;
- emergency management of massive inflows of forced migrants;
- stimulation of repatriation.

24. These Programs shall be approved by Resolutions of the Government of the Republic of Armenia. Each Program shall have an evidence-based, needs-based and gender sensitive action plan, which defines practical steps to attain programmatic objectives, expected outcomes and the methodology for their evaluation. In particular, the Program and Action plan of integration and reintegration shall formulate interventions, the implementation of which shall contribute to achieving the integration and reintegration goals laid out in this Conceptual framework.

The Program and Action plan of migration flows management shall formulate interventions that are necessary to increase the effectiveness of the fight against irregular and illegal migration, of management of borders, entry, exit, the management of residence of foreign nationals, as well as the improvement of the protection of rights and interests of various groups of migrants, and the improvement of international protection.

The Program and Action plan of emergency management of massive inflows of forced migrants shall formulate practical interventions that are necessary for the management of crisis situations, currently caused by the new coronavirus type of infection (COVID-19), the war unleashed by the republic of Azerbaijan against the Republic of Artsakh on September 27, 2020, as well as possible new crises. The Program and action plan of stimulation of repatriation shall formulate specific interventions, which shall stimulate various groups of repatriants (those returning with their families, initiating businesses, with employment offers, etc.) to take rational decisions on repatriation.

25. With the purpose of full and effective implementation of the Conceptual framework and its Programs, a decree of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia shall establish a Council on Issues of Migration Policy (hereinafter referred to as the Council), to be headed by the Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure and, following the formation of the Ministry of Interior, by the Minister of Interior. The Council shall bring together representatives of all stakeholder public agencies, international organisations, of civil society organisations and associations of various migrant groups.

26. With the purpose of ensuring the implementation of the Conceptual framework and its Programs the responsible bodies, within 10 working days following the end of every half-year, shall submit a report to the Council Secretariat. Within 5 working days thereafter the Council Secretariat shall submit the package of reports to the Council, also publishing it on its official web site.

On the basis of semi-annual reports, the Council shall, by January 31 of the subsequent year, adopt an annual report on the implementation of the Conceptual framework and strategies.

27. The function of monitoring and evaluating the Conceptual framework and the progress of its Programs is performed by the Migration Service and, following the formation of the Ministry of Interior, by the Migration and Citizenship Service (Council Secretariat), which, at the end of every year shall submit the monitoring and evaluation findings to the Council, providing a basis for launching political discussions over the progress of of the Conceptual framework and its Programs. With the purpose of ensuring a more comprehensive and multidimensional discussion, at least once every half-year, the representatives of civil society organisations may conduct independent monitoring and evaluation, submitting the results to the Council.

28. At the end of every year the Council, upon receiving and analyzing the annual summary report from the Council Secretariat, may, with the involvement of respective responsible bodies, submit recommendations to the Government of the Republic of Armenia, to review the Conceptual framework and its Programs on the basis of monitoring findings.

29. With the purpose of assessing the impact of the Conceptual framework and Programs, the Council may initiate midterm or long-term public opinion surveys within various target groups, on the basis of which it shall measure the impact of reforms on the society. As a result of evaluation and analysis of the midterm survey results, the Council may initiate a new cycle of reviewing and amending the Conceptual framework and Programs, as well as of the implementation methods and mechanisms thereof.

30. With the purpose of ensuring the highest degree of transparency in the process, the Conceptual framework and Programs shall be posted on the official web site of the Migration Service. The annual reports of the Council shall also be posted on the fore mentioned web site.

31. It is expected that, as a result of the efforts charted by the Conceptual framework:

- the efficiency of border management shall increase;
- the level of integration and protection of rights of various groups migrants of shall rise;
- irregular and illegal migration shall diminish;
- the level of preparedness to respond to migration crises shall increase.

32. These results in turn shall contribute to expedite the process of visa liberalization with the Eurpoperan Union, the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the implementation of the United Nations Global Compact on Migration, as well as attaining closer cooperation within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Union.

9. FINANCIAL ASSESSMENT

33. An accurate assessment of financial means, necessary in order to attain the resolution of fundamental problems defined by the Conceptual framework and reach the strategic goals thereof, may be made within the framework of the four Programs emanating from the provisions of the Conceptual framework.

34. Financial means for the implementation of work along the directions charted by the Conceptual framework are anticipated from the state budget of the Republic of Armenia (within state budget appropriation of means to stakeholder bodies), from targeted financing by international organisations or foreign states, from targeted financing for the implementation of strategies and ensuing actions by civil society organisations, and from other financial sources not prohibited by laws of the Republic of Armenia.

10. BRIEF CONCLUSION

35. The Conceptual framework defines state commitments in the sector of migration management vis-à-vis citizens of the Republic of Armenia, the Armenian Diaspora and the international community, as well as charts areas the players within which are invited to cooperation.

36. With the purpose of ensuring effective management of the migration sector, steps shall be taken, on the one hand, to overcome the fundamental problems indicated by the Conceptual framework and, on the other, in the direction of eliminating the causes thereof (gaps in the comprehensiveness of governance and scarce capacity). At the same time importance shall be ascribed to the creation of mechanisms to accumulate knowledge and experience, continual training, expansion of international cooperation and provision of infrastructure and technologies to bodies implementing migration policy, something that is of crucial importance in improving the quality of organising migration management and raising the quality of services rendered.

37. Reforms being initiated in the management of the migration sector shall contribute to strengthening relations with the European Union in the areas of border management, document security, return and reintegration, the fight against trafficking in human beings and organized crime, and shall pave the way for negotiations around visa liberalization. The planned reforms shall also allow to strengthen the cooperation within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Union, facilitating workforce mobility and contributing to economic development.

**Chief of Staff of the Prime Minister
of the Republic of Armenia**

A. Torosyan

**ACTION PLAN
OF THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE STATE MANAGEMENT OF
MIGRATION BY THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA**

N	Action	Implementing entity/Coordinator	date
1.	Submission to the Staff of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia of a draft Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Armenia ‘On approving the 2021-2031 Strategy of the Republic of Armenia for the regulation of integration and reintegration issues of the migration policy, and the Action Plan for 2021-2025 called for thereby.’	Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure of RA	Second decade of June, 2021
2.	Submission to the Staff of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia of a draft Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Armenia ‘On approving the program for the management of migration flows.’	Ministry of Interior of RA ¹	9 months following the establishment of the Ministry of Interior
3.	Submission to the Staff of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia of a draft Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Armenia ‘On approving the program for emergency management of massive inflows of forced migrants.’	Ministry of Emergency Situations of the Republic of Armenia Ministry of Territorial administration and infrastructure of RA	Third decade of August, 2021
4.	Submission to the Staff of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia of a draft Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Armenia ‘On approving the program for stimulating repatriation.’	Office of the High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure of RA	First decade of September, 2022



1 The establishment of the new Ministry is envisaged by Point 3 of the Second Dimension of Appendix 2, Resolution #638-L of April 23, 2020, 'On approving the Strategy of the Republic of Armenia for Police reforms and the Action Plan for 2020-2022 called for thereby.' The Government of the Republic of Armenia, by its Resolution #586-A of April 15, 2021, has approved the legislative initiative of the Government of the Republic of Armenia on legislative drafts amending a number of laws supporting the formation of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The package of bills mentioned above ensuring the implementation of reforms has been forwarded to the National Assembly.