

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
THE CHALLENGE OF EDUCATIONAL REFORM IN
MULTI-ETHNIC CENTRAL ASIA

CONCLUDING STATEMENT
Tashkent, 28 November 2006

The Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Ministry of Education, Science and Youth Policy of the Kyrgyz Republic, the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Tajikistan and the Ministry of Public Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan took part in the international conference “The Challenge of Educational Reform in Multi-Ethnic Central Asia” on 28 November 2006 in Tashkent, and agreed on the following:

- (1) They will promote social integration with respect for diversity in the context of efforts to modernize their education systems. They recognize the value of inter-state co-operation in matters of national minority education and social integration.
- (2) They stress the role of the State language as a means of social integration and will take additional measures to facilitate the proper acquisition of the State language by persons belonging to national minorities in the process of education. They reconfirm their commitments within the OSCE framework to respect the right of persons belonging to national minorities to maintain their national identity through mother-tongue teaching at the primary and secondary school level in places of compact settlement. These commitments include the adequate supply of textbooks to national minority schools for the study of the State and in minority languages and human resources as well as the provision of methodological support to the teaching of the State and minority language.

The kin-states agree to render, upon the request of the host state, assistance for schools teaching in national minority languages in the development of curriculum and textbooks and teacher training and in-service training.

They regard bilingual/multilingual education, i.e. education through the medium of more than one language, as a useful way of promoting the State language while respecting the linguistic rights of national minorities.

They will strive to adopt a unified evaluation system of language proficiency taking account of international best practice.

- (3) They will annually exchange information on the deficit/surplus of teachers in national minority schools with a view to developing arrangements for mutual assistance. They will facilitate staff and student exchanges between pedagogical universities and colleges and support the sharing of experiences in the modern techniques of teaching.
- (4) They will facilitate, on the basis of mutual agreement, regular staff exchanges in order to foster the dissemination of modern teaching methodologies, including the teaching of the State and minority languages. They will take measures to co-ordinate the

activities of and encourage co-operation between the in-service minority teacher training centres in order to upgrade the skills of teachers from national minority schools.

- (5) They will establish four Working Groups, i.e. Curriculum and Textbook Development, Language Teaching, Teacher Training and In-service Training, Distance Learning and Information Technology. The Working Groups will meet at least once a year at the level of the Heads of Departments in order to discuss on-going and prospective inter-state co-operation in the four areas. Each Working Group will be chaired by one of the States which will take the lead in chairing, making proposals and driving forward co-operation on each of the subjects. They will organize a ministerial review conference every two years to assess progress in implementation of the present statement.
- (6) They stress the importance of foreign language teaching in their education systems as a launch pad for successful interaction with the outside world and promotion of trade, investment and youth employment. In this regard, they appeal to other OSCE participating States to increase their methodological, personnel and material assistance to the teaching of foreign languages in the States of Central Asia.

Representatives of Afghanistan, the Russian Federation and Turkmenistan participated in the conference.