

Budapest Security Conference: Panel II: Migration as a long-term challenge

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Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Colleagues, Partners and Friends,

It is a great pleasure and honour for me to address you today as the newly elected Director General of the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD).

Today, we experience the highest numbers of displacement since the 2nd World War. More than 60 million people are estimated to have fled from war, conflict and violence on a global scale. In 2015, roughly 1 million refugees, displaced persons and irregular migrants had made their way to Europe across the Mediterranean and in the second half of the year mainly via the so called Balkans route. Countries of transit and destination face enormous challenges in dealing with such large numbers of people and in regaining control of their migration systems. Consequently, the current migration situation in Europe is widely described as the most challenging since after the fall of the Iron Curtain.

These challenges also suggest that the existing policies and instruments to steer and manage migration are neither fully functional nor fully sufficient anymore. The 1951 Convention, the Dublin Convention, the Schengen System, the Common European Asylum Systems, the EU Acquis on legal and labour migration all had been developed in times of comparatively modest inflows. In view of today's huge numbers the European migration architecture has come under immense pressure. It will need a fundamental reorientation, based on sound and functioning policies and carried by the spirit of European solidarity. To ensure "orderly migration" European migration governance needs a holistic European concept as well as functioning individual policies in the various areas of migration management.

When we look at the situation from a security perspective, it is necessary to find a balance of two aspects: state security and human security. State security refers to the preservation of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of a state. Human security can be understood as the ensuring of the survival, livelihood and dignity of people in response to current and emerging threats. In the current situation there is an inevitable tension between security-related interests of states and the need to apply a human rights centred approach in pursuing them. It is difficult to imagine that this challenge can be met at the national level and by individual policies

alone. We need a truly comprehensive and a truly international approach; in our context this also means a truly European approach.

This approach has to focus on a number of priorities:

States have to regain control over the present migration flows, including international information exchange, registration, reception, and status determination. This will only work via close cooperation among police and border authorities in the area of border management and the fight against smuggling and trafficking in human beings;

States have to offer protection to those in need of it, but also ensure the return and functioning reintegration of those who are not in need of protection;

States have to improve the situation of refugees and displaced persons in the countries neighbouring conflict zones from immediate assistance to temporary economic integration, education for the children, access to health care and housing etc. For this we need to cooperate with the countries hosting large numbers of refugees on an open and fair basis, knowing that we will experience difficulties and setbacks in this cooperation;

But it is equally important to look at the long-term implications and the long-term challenges of migration. Even if we manage to solve today's crisis and to resolve the violent conflicts causing it, immense challenges will remain. Today, app. 2 billion people live in the main regions of origin of migration – Africa, the Arab World and South Asia. By 2050 it will be 3.6 billion. Although many of these countries make good progress in terms of economic development they still face a huge problem. There are simply not enough gratifying positions in their economic and social systems to provide perspectives to their younger generations. Some experts argue that for every free vacancy in developing countries there is a minimum of four to five candidates, who are often well-educated and have aspirations similar to ours when it comes to their life and future. If only 10% of these people decide to move to the highest developed countries, it will exceed their integration capacities by far.

It is often argued that Europe needs immigration. And this is not just a media catchword; demographic ageing is a reality that will affect our economies and welfare systems more than many are aware of. But we have to be realistic – it is not about simply taking in people. We need the right kind of immigration with the right kind of skills and we have to become a lot better in assessing our labour market needs and in bringing our training standards to countries of origin. We have to do a lot of homework in this field.

Closely linked is the issue of integration: the success of our migration policies depends on more successful participation of migrants in our societies, both with regard to rights and obligations. Failed integration feeds exclusion and in the worst case leads to violent extremism, and in view of the heinous terrorist attacks in France and Turkey we have to be very aware of that. Successful integration of migrants is a precondition for security and cohesion in our societies.

However, the demand for emigration in countries of origin will exceed the demand for immigration in countries of destination for a very long time. This implies two things: First, migration control will be a necessity also in the future. Second, we have to do a lot more to help developing countries to increase the perspectives for their young populations. Development policy is also security policy. But it will take patience and persistence to change the conditions in

countries of origin in a way that the younger generations see a real perspective in building their future at home. There is a long way to go and until then Europe will need functioning policies to control (and to restrict) immigration.

Last but not least, we have to be aware that the current crisis is not just a question of migration. Its implications are a lot wider. It has revealed a deep rift between the Member States of the European Union, a rift that has the potential to threaten the existence of the Union as we know it. The price for failing on migration will be very high for all of us. It might affect our economic prosperity, our political stability and our security situation a lot deeper than most of us want to imagine.

It is clear that in a crisis like this there is disagreement on the right approaches. But we must not lose the will to work together. We need a reinforced commitment towards joint solutions, which will not be perfect but can be decisively better than the current ones or any solutions that focus solely on the national context. There is no simple, there is no single solution. We have to become better in a number of areas: new approaches in refugee protection; border management and control; more effective tackling of migrant smuggling and trafficking; labour migration; integration; and dialogue with countries of origin and transit. And we have to put more emphasis on the “real” root causes of migration by improving the perspectives of the younger generations in the countries of origin of international migration flows. The task is a big one but we have to meet it. Only then we can ensure security in Europe.