

OSCE Security Committee: Regional cooperation in addressing illegal migration security related challenges

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Excellencies, Distinguished Colleagues and Friends,

It is with great pleasure that I have the opportunity to address you today on a highly important issue – regional cooperation in addressing illegal migration and security.

As Director General of the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) I lead an organisation whose main aim it is to foster cooperation between states, at the regional level, at the global level and also with the various non-governmental stakeholders that play a role in migration. This has been the DNA of our organisation from its very beginning; and we are a 100% convinced that in the area of migration no solutions can be found without such cooperation.

Before I share a few thoughts with you on this important matter; I want say a couple of words about ICMPD. The Centre was founded in 1993 by Switzerland and Austria in reaction to the fall of the Iron Curtain and in expectation of major challenges resulting from increased migration flows from the East. Many new challenges have come in addition since then; some have been met with good solutions, some are still waiting for responses to be found. Today ICMPD has fifteen Member States, about 150 staff members, an increasing network of missions, operates field offices and representations in the European neighbourhood and further abroad and runs more than 60 capacity building projects, migration dialogues and research initiatives in many parts of the world.

But let's turn to migration, one of the burning issues on the European and Global agenda. Today, we experience the highest numbers of displacement since the 2nd World War. About 60 million people are estimated to have fled from war, conflict and violence. In 2015, close to 1.3 million refugees, displaced persons and irregular migrants had applied for asylum in the EU alone, the highest number since the end of World War II. First, they had made their way to Europe across the Mediterranean and in the second half of the year mainly via the so called Balkans route. Since last summer the countries along the routes and the other European partners are struggling to find solutions, reach agreements and regain control of the situation. It is clear that in a crisis like this there was disagreement on the right approaches. And for some time it seemed as if states had lost the will to work together. The EU – Turkey agreement of

March 2016 spreads some hope that regardless of all challenges there is a reinforced commitment towards joint solutions.

We must not fool ourselves. We have made steps in the right direction. But we know that the EU – Turkey agreement, even if it works, can only be a starting point. The fundamental issue of how to fulfil the obligations of protection in the age of mass migration; the very pressing issue of cooperation with Libya and the long-term issue of emigration pressures from Africa and other world regions all wait to be resolved.

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. State security and human security are two sides of a coin – we will not have the one without having the other.

In the current situation there is an inevitable tension between security-related interests of states and the need for a human rights centred approach in pursuing them. It is hard to imagine that this challenge can be met at the national level alone. We need a truly comprehensive and a truly international approach to shoulder our joint responsibilities.

This approach has to focus on a number of priorities:

States have to regain control over migration flows, including information exchange, registration, reception, and status determination. States have to offer protection to those in need of it. We will have to find new ways to guarantee protection; not replacing the 1951 Refugee Convention but adding instruments that offer protection to the millions of people who need it but will not make it to the safe countries of Europe or the Northern hemisphere;

At the same time we have to ensure the return and functioning reintegration of those who are not in need of protection;

We 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;

For those migrants and refugees that will stay in our countries, we have to ensure the successful participation 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 we had to witness lately, we have to be very aware of that. Successful integration of migrants is a precondition for security and cohesion in our societies;

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. There will be a long way to go and until then Europe will need functioning policies to control and limit immigration.

Last but not least, we have to win the fight against smuggling and trafficking in human beings. This will take time and energy, and it will only work via close cooperation between states at the regional and global level.

The fight against Human Smuggling can only be successful when it is part of a broader set of policies addressing conflict resolution, support for countries neighbouring conflict zones and the root causes of migration. When we look at Human Smuggling as such, we have to look at its core - and this is profit. The logic of Human Smuggling is based on economic principles, and there can be no doubt that smugglers make very big gains. Why? Well, we make it too easy for them. If we want to succeed, we must turn Human Smuggling from a low-risk and high-profit business to a high-risk and low-profit business. And we can do that, if we do it the right way.

ICMPD has engaged in a lot of research on the ways in which Human Smuggling networks operate. Our research showed that state measures addressing Human Smuggling and irregular migration normally have an immediate impact. Smugglers have to change their modus operandi; smugglers have to change their routes. But when states implement these measures only with a view to their domestic situation and not in the framework of regional or international responses, this often leads to a simple shifting of routes to other countries and the creation of new „hotspots“. Traditionally, state borders are the main obstacles for smuggling networks; they are the best controlled and most best secured obstacles. But in the areas between state borders there is lower pressure and smugglers can often operate undetected. States tend to focus on preventing smugglers and smuggled migrants from entry to their territory. There is less emphasis on preventing smugglers and smuggled migrants from leaving states' territories. And this gives them the space they need for their business.

We have to narrow this space. We have to establish a constant degree of pressure on organisers and smuggling networks from origin to destination, at all stages and most importantly on the territories of states. States need to acknowledge that „the weakest links in a chain are the ones to break it“. The weak links will be the states whose structures are overburdened, be it by a lack of capacities or the sheer numbers of refugees and irregular migrants arriving at their borders. There is a need for real cooperation between all countries that goes beyond domestic interests. Otherwise the most burdened countries will continue to be weak links and not be able to prevent irregular migrants from moving on. Such cooperation has to be based on truly comprehensive measures which involve all countries along the chain. Most of all, it has to focus on measures that tackle the activities of Humans Smugglers at entry points, within the territory of states and at exit points alike.

We, as ICMPD, have seen many times that both regional cooperation and comprehensiveness do work and do produce excellent results. Let me take the example of border management. ICMPD engages since many years in the framework of the Border Management Programme Central Asia (BOMCA), one of the largest border management programmes in the world. Similar activities are implemented with Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Tunisia and Lebanon. In Africa, in countries like Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauretania and Niger, our approach also includes civil society and border communities, as they play crucial roles in cross-border traffic. We have also started to cooperate with the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre to address new trends

relevant to border management and security. Border management can no longer be a matter of a single agency; it has to involve many different actors cooperating across state borders and within regions. Of course this enhances the complexity – but if steered properly, it is exactly these settings that deliver in the interests of states and the international community. We have to apply these Good Practices also in the fight against Human Smuggling. I am sure that we can have a serious impact if we do so. And this will allow us to break the smugglers’ business model and to regain control over migration flows.

Ladies and gentlemen, many of the existing policies and instruments to steer migration at the European and the global level will need a fundamental reorientation, based on sound and functioning policies and carried by the spirit of cooperation and solidarity. To ensure “orderly migration” we need new holistic concepts and functioning individual policies in the various areas of migration management - from protection to border management to integration to a fight against Human Smuggling networks. It is my ambition that ICMPD plays an even stronger role in this, as a platform for discussion, exchange and policy-making between all states linked by international migration; and as a think-tank to search for new solutions for the current and future migration issues. In this regard, I hope that we will continue and deepen the good cooperation between ICMPD and the OSCE and its participating States.