

# **Crans Montana Forum, 27th Annual Session: The New Challenge of Migration is changing Our World**

## **Speech by Mr Michael Spindelegger, Director General, ICMPD**

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Excellencies, Distinguished Colleagues and Friends,

It is with special pleasure that I have the opportunity to address you today in my capacity as Director General of the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) and to open the session on “the changes the new challenge of migration brings to our world”.

But before I do that I want say a couple of words about my organisation. The Crans Montana Forum and the ICMPD have quite some things in common. The Forum held its first annual meeting in 1990, the ICMPD was founded 1993. The first Forum was dedicated to the political and economic reconstruction in the aftermath of the Cold War. ICMPD’s initial task was to help states in managing migration after the fall of the Iron Curtain. Both organisations want to build a more humane and impartial world, both believe in dialogue and partnerships between all states and stakeholders at the international level. Today ICMPD has about 150 staff members, an increasing network of missions, operates field offices and representations in the European neighbourhood and further abroad. It 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. It is important to stress that today’s migration challenges are not entirely new. What is new is their their magnitude and complexity. In 2002, the number of international migrants stood at 160 million. Today, the number has grown to 243 million. At the same time we experience the highest numbers of refugees and displaced persons in our recent history. According to the newest UNHCR figures, about 65 million people around the world have fled from war, conflict and violence. This number has tripled since 2002, when there were about 22 million displaced persons. In 2015, about 1.3 million persons had applied for asylum in the EU, the highest number since the end of World War II. And migration challenges will be with us in the future as well. Today, 2 billion persons live in the main regions of origin of migration – Africa, the Arab World and South Asia. By 2050 it will be 3.6 billion. Despite good progress in some of these countries it is safe to say that emigration pressures will continue to exist and will exceed the immigration demands of countries of destination. We have to be honest; migration will need control, will need limitations also in the future.

The “refugee crisis” of 2015 and 2016 also made obvious that that the existing European and global policies and instruments to steer migration do not function anymore. To ensure protection and to achieve “orderly migration”, the global migration governance needs a fundamental reorientation. It needs a holistic concept and functioning individual policies in all areas of migration management. The main questions to be addressed are clear: new approaches in international protection; border management; labour migration; integration; dialogue with countries of origin and transit; tackling the “real” root causes of migration; fighting migrant smuggling and trafficking etc.

It is clear that in a crisis like the one that we are facing there is disagreement on the right approaches. And for some time it seemed as if the European states had lost the will to work together. The EU – Turkey agreement from March 2016 spreads some hope that regardless of all challenges there is a reinforced commitment towards joint solutions. But a lot remains to be done; and the solutions cannot be limited to Europe and its neighbourhood, they have to be found on the global level.

Today’s programme asks two important questions: Will other regions be affected by the migration flows that reached Europe last year? And can there be a positive impact of these migrations in case of successful integration? In short – the answer to both questions is yes.

First of all, no state should be under the illusion that it can stand aside and will not be affected. Economic success can turn a former country of origin to a country of destination within a few years. But in case of a crisis, this can happen in months and no one can predict the size and direction of flows. Let’s take the example of Syria. Before the civil war, only a few thousand Syrians migrated to the EU every year. Within three years this changed to millions of Syrian refugees trying to reach Europe. Migration patterns change quickly, within a month a state can find itself on a newly emerging route although it was never affected before. It is in the interest of every state to contribute to joint, international and global solutions. Isolated national approaches will not succeed in doing so.

When it comes to potential positive impacts of the recent migrations, a lot will depend on applying the right policies. Research suggests that in most cases immigration is positive for the economies of migrant receiving states, raises GDP and GDP per capita, enhances total employment and does not lead to the displacement of the domestic and resident population on the labour market. It is also beneficial for countries of origin. In the last years global migrant remittances to developing countries were at 440 billion USD, a sum more than three times higher than official development assistance.

But it is not only about economic growth. Many Central and Eastern European countries will face serious challenges resulting from demographic ageing and decline. Some of them already have a declining labour force; many others will follow in the next ten years. Today, about 72 % of the European Union population is of working age, while 28 % are older than 65 years. In 2080, this ratio will be 50:50. Migration alone will not solve the problem. It will take a broad range of measures to deal with this challenge but without functioning immigration this will be extremely difficult.

However, success and acceptance of our migration policies depend on successful integration of migrants in our societies, with regard to rights and obligations and with regard to economic, social and cultural inclusion. We need to become better in assessing the skills of those who have come and will come in the future, in bridging gaps in education and training, and in teaching our languages AND values. Integration is also a security issue. If it fails, this feeds exclusion and in the worst case leads to criminality or violent extremism. In view of the heinous terrorist attacks in Belgium, France and Turkey we have to be very aware of that. Successful integration does not only help migrants; it is a precondition for security and cohesion in our societies as well.

Ladies and gentlemen, many of the existing policies and instruments to steer migration at the European and the global level will need 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 - from protection to border management to integration to the fight against Human Smuggling. It is my ambition that ICMPD plays a strong role in this, as a platform for discussion, exchange and policy-making; 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 Crans Montana Forum.