

## **Towards a common EU policy on Migration and Refugees**

### **Keynote: A durable and future oriented policy for EU Immigration and Integration**

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*Copenhagen, 21 March, 2017*

Ladies and Gentlemen, Distinguished Audience, Mr. Chairman,

It is with special pleasure that I have the opportunity to address you today on the question of how we can develop a durable and future oriented European migration policy. Obviously, in my capacity as Director General of the ICMPD I have to deal with this question quite a lot; and I hope that I can present at least some answers to these questions today.

Before I share a few thoughts with you on this important matter; I want say a couple of words about my organisation. The ICMPD was founded in 1993 by Switzerland and Austria. From its very beginning, ICMPD wanted to promote cooperation between its Member States, with the EU and of course also other countries, partners and stakeholders. Today ICMPD has fifteen Member States, about 250 staff members, and runs more than 60 capacity building projects, migration dialogues and research initiatives in many parts of the world. Denmark has been a very much appreciated partner in many of our initiatives and I truly hope that our cooperation will continue and deepen in the future.

It is quite challenging to answer the question on a durable and future oriented migration policy in a short key note. But I think that there are some main issues we have to understand, when we want to build such a policy. We have to understand that we are not talking about a European issue but about an international issue which poses specific challenges for Europe and asks for specific answers from Europe. And we have to understand that we will not be able to solve the European challenges on European soil; we will only manage to solve them when we address the challenges related to displacement, flight and migration in those countries and regions where they arise in the first place. We need to get the house in order when it comes to intra-EU policies and cooperation. But we also need to look beyond Europe and develop solutions with all other partners of the international community.

Let us start with the intra-European policies. Without a doubt, there is a lot of work ahead of us. Many of the instruments that have formed the European Asylum and Migration System do not work anymore. From the beginning, the Dublin System had put an uneven burden on the Member States situated at the external borders; it finally collapsed under the mass influx of 2015. The Temporary Protection Directive had been designed for such a mass influx; but was not triggered by the Council when the situation emerged. A functioning control of the external borders remains a big challenge. The EU never managed to develop functioning policies on labour migration, which is one of the reasons why migrants choose the irregular path or make use of the asylum systems. And there is still no satisfying answer and no political agreement how to ensure international protection for those who need it.

Currently, many of the regulations and directives forming the Common System are under review. There is a number of proposals on the table, there is some progress, but the issue of solidarity and burden sharing is still open. Notwithstanding this, ultimately we will have to find a way to improve responsibility and burden sharing at the EU level.

However, the arena which will decide over success or failure of our migration policies is the global arena. We all know that the last two years have been very challenging for Europe and the Member States of the EU. More than 1.3 million persons applied for asylum in the EU in 2015; in 2016 it was still about 1.1 million. But we speak about a total of 65 million displaced people around the world, 22 million of them in the larger neighbourhood of the EU. Europe has done a lot in terms of hosting millions of refugees and by providing hundreds of millions of Euros in supporting refugees outside Europe. But we all have to acknowledge that countries like Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Pakistan or Iran have a much heavier burden to shoulder than the European countries. And we have to find solutions together with them.

In September 2016, the UN adopted the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants. The Declaration aims at the development of a global framework for the protection of refugees and for managing migration. It reflects a thinking where the protection of displaced persons is no longer understood as an affair of countries close to conflicts or situated along migratory routes but where the global community has to respond, act and support as a whole and regardless of where a crisis situation emerges.

It is a great achievement that all UN Members have worked together on such strong commitments and that they acknowledge their shared responsibility towards refugees and migrants. By 2018 they want to agree two global compacts on refugees and on safe, orderly and regular migration. We at ICMPD believe that Europe needs to engage strongly in this process; simply because we will not be able to solve our challenges without global responsibility sharing and without a global migration management regime. Conversely, we also believe that without European support, resources and capacities it will be very difficult to translate into action what was concluded in September in New York.

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But how can we contribute to that aim? In short, the Vienna Migration Conference concluded that we have to become better in three main areas; and those areas could be labelled as *protection, prosperity and partnership*.

Let us start with protection. We know we must not mix up refugees and displacement with other types of migration. But we also know that sustainable solutions in the area of protection are a precondition for moving on in other areas of migration as well. The EU still struggles with its understanding of solidarity and responsibility sharing. But the VMC also showed a clear commitment to the Geneva Refugee Convention; to resettlement and to the continuation of the discussion on relocation within Europe. And nobody challenged the need to significantly step up the support for the main refugee hosting countries and to work on

creating perspectives for refugees in those countries. The aim has to be “to bring jobs to the refugees rather than to bring refugees to the jobs.”

The second “P” stands for prosperity. All agreed that safe, orderly and regular migration will only be possible if people are not forced to migrate but have migration as a choice. In order to achieve this, we need to create more prosperity in countries of origin. For this, we need policies that combine development cooperation, trade, training, energy, security, institution and capacity building. We need to increase the actors involved and the financial tools available. We need new initiatives that trigger private investments and tap into private sector know-how. And things are happening: In September 2016, the European Commission proposed the establishment of a new External Investment Plan to promote sustainable growth and job creation in Africa. In January 2017, Germany announced its “Marshall Plan for Africa” which concentrates on fair trade, private investment, economic development, job creation and employment. It is notable that the Plan also aims to enhance the prospects of German companies on African markets, which should not be left to Chinese, Russian or Turkish companies. It would be great to see economic cooperation that was rooted in migration related goals, evolve to something so much bigger, benefitting all partners and reducing global inequality.

The third “P” refers to partnership on migration with our non-European partners. I think it is obvious that partnership is not something you preach, something you put in a paper, something you ask for when it suits you – partnership is something you have to practice and something you have to build. Partnership is shared commitment, where all partners have rights and obligations, and where all partners benefit and take a part of the burden. I think the instruments and initiatives that have emerged in Europe over the last eighteen months reflect this notion of partnership a lot better than past attempts. I think there is a new seriousness and soberness when it comes to the necessity of investing in long-term partnership.

But that is not the only partnership European governments have to rebuild. They also have to rebuild the partnerships with their own voters. What happened in 2015 led to a deep rift between governments and populations as governments displayed their inability to control borders and steer entry of non-citizens which is one of the key functions of the state. European governments have to regain trust and confidence of their voters and they have to do this swiftly. 2017 will see a number of decisive elections in France, the Netherlands and Germany. Those elections will not only decide about the future of Europe’s migration policy; they will also decide about the future, if not the existence of the European Union as such.

It would be a peculiar irony of history, if European States put in question the existence of the EU because of migration; only to find out later on that they need exactly this institutionalised cooperation to address their own domestic challenges. How should the smaller Member States establish functioning partnership with countries of origin and transit by themselves? How should Member States situated at the Southern borders stem immigration flows on their own? These flows will not simply stop just because there is no EU anymore. And how much more difficult would the establishment of a global regime based on global solidarity and responsibility sharing be when Europe ceases to contribute as an organised, unified and financially capable partner? I think the answers to these questions are obvious and everything speaks for a strong and unified Europe in the migration policy field. We can only hope that the European voters take note of the serious efforts taken by their governments, regain their trust and acknowledge the progress made.

In view of what I have said, partnership will be one of the overriding themes of ICMPD's work in 2017; partnership on migration of course, but also partnership within Europe, between Europe and its neighbours, with the global community and last but not least, with the European voters.

Thank you very much.