

## Vienna Energy Forum 2017 - Clean Energy for Migrants and Vulnerable Groups

---

Check speech against delivery

Vienna, 9 May 2017

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

Ladies and Gentlemen, Distinguished Audience, Mr. Chairman,

It is a great honour for me to open today's side event of the Vienna Energy Forum 2017 on "Clean Energy for Migrants and Vulnerable Groups". I consider this event and this topic of particular relevance, and that is because of three main reasons. First of all, it addresses one of the "real" root causes for migration. Second, it provides one of the explanations why refugees see no other option than moving on from their first host countries. And third, it explains why the full economic potential of refugees and migrants cannot be harnessed up to this point. As Director General of the ICMPD I want my organisation to focus on the real root causes for displacement and migration - and access to energy is one of them - because I am deeply convinced that no European and no global migration policy will work which does not manage to find solutions for these issues.

Let me start with a quick run through some of the usual headlines: 244 million persons are estimated to be international migrants. More than 65 million persons are refugees, displaced or internally displaced. Countries like Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Pakistan or Turkey host between 700,000 up to 3 million refugees. More than 2.4 million persons have applied for asylum in the EU in 2015 and 2016. The largest refugee camps, located in Kenya, Jordan, South Sudan or Tanzania, host between 70,000 and nearly 200,000 persons. Many of them will stay there for long time periods, often without any perspective for decent and gainful economic activity.

In view of all of this, there is a lively debate on whether the current migration and refugee situation is the most challenging ever. I do not want to enter into this discussion, but I want to stress an important point that is linked to it. The perception of crisis that dominates the current debate on migration and displacement has led to some fundamental changes in the thinking on how the international community should deal with it. Until recently, both decision makers and the public debate regularly referred to "poverty" as the main root cause for migration. Now, much more attention is paid to the complex interplay between demography, economic and social change, and the lack of perspective for especially the young and well educated in

countries of origin. Until recently, States tried to solve their own migration challenges by unilateral policies and by trying to shift the problem to other countries or regions. Now, as it became obvious that this approach does not work, the idea of real partnership on migration between all members of the international community has come to the forefront more than ever before. And until recently, there were many nice sounding words on the links between migration and development but not so much action that follow up on them. Last year's political developments spread some hope that this is about to change.

I think that the New York Declaration of September 2016; the global compacts on migration and refugees; or the EU's partnership framework with non-EU countries reflect a new thinking. All these initiatives have one principle in common. They acknowledge that safe, orderly and regular migration will only be possible if people are not forced to migrate but have migration as a choice among many in securing their livelihoods and fulfilling their ambitions. In order to achieve this, we need to create more prosperity. And for this aim we need policies that combine development cooperation, trade, training, mobility, energy, security and institution building. We need to increase the number of 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, for instance, proposed the establishment of a new External Investment Plan to promote sustainable growth and job creation in Africa. The Plan should focus on fragile states, follow a coherent approach, and go beyond classical development assistance by using guarantees to overcome private investment bottlenecks. We need more of this.

In all of this, the access to energy will be a crucial and decisive aspect. In our modern world, energy access is the inevitable precondition for any meaningful economic activity; be it at the individual level or at the level of societies and states. But in the context of migration, we talk about so much more. We talk about perspectives at home and abroad; about livelihoods for individuals and whole families; about autonomy and dignity of refugees and migrants; about security and safety for displaced people; we talk about economic participation that can transform refugees from economic burden to economic advantage; and we talk about relationships with host communities, which benefit from infrastructure investment and access to energy as well. At ICMPD we are currently developing an initiative on return and reintegration for Nigeria, which should create jobs and economic opportunities for return migrants and members of home communities. A key component of this initiative is to ensure the access to renewable energy for about 50,000 persons in the target regions. And we know that this very component will be crucial for the success of the whole project.

Partnership will be one of the overriding themes of ICMPD's work in 2017; partnership on migration of course; partnership on addressing the real root causes; but also partnership within Europe, between Europe and its neighbours, and between Europe and the global community. I think that economic and energy partnerships are fundamental to make this cooperation work; and I look very much forward to listening

to my distinguished co-speakers and panellists and their insights and ideas on how to make this happen.