

Informal meeting of Justice and Home Affairs Ministers

Working Lunch

Global aspects of migration: Discussion on the main building blocks of the future Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration

Check speech against delivery

Sofia, 25-26 January 2018

Esteemed Minister of Interior, Mr Radeva, dear Ministers, Commissioners, my UN colleagues, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, dear friends,

Let me start by expressing my gratitude to the Bulgarian Presidency for inviting us to this informal Justice and Home Affairs meeting and for being such excellent hosts today. It is an honour and duty for me to be here with you. Joining my UN colleagues is a strong reminder that it takes specific European efforts to address the global challenge of international migration.

Let me start with a principle remark. When we look at the main drivers of international migration we look at conflict; socio-economic change; demography; and the economic disparities persisting on our globe. It is these drivers which force, motivate and enable people to move. Organised Crime structures moreover abuse this motivation of people to look for a better life. It is these drivers we have to address when we want to manage migration; harness its full potential, reduce irregular migration, prevent the loss of lives on the route and convince the European public that we are well capable of effectively regulating international migration.

The UN compact process has placed these issues firmly at the global level. We at ICMPD see the unique opportunity of a global framework for partnership and cooperation and we are fully supportive of the consultation and negotiation processes; Europe will be better enabled to address its own specific migration challenges when there is enhanced global solidarity, responsibility and cooperation. Conversely, we also believe that without European resources and capacities it will be very difficult to translate the global compacts into meaningful action.

The GCM should help to improve global migration governance and should support states in achieving this goal. It has to be welcomed that it takes a pragmatic approach and focuses on

result-oriented commitments. The agenda is still ambitious; but it takes the right steps in the right order; and this will ensure that we actually deliver on the ground.

In the excellent background paper for this meeting, the Bulgarian Presidency has asked some key questions regarding the EU position on the compact. I do not want to repeat what has been said before but want to highlight a few aspects I consider particularly important.

The current challenges linked to migration and displacement are not only humanitarian in nature, they are global and economic, and require an effective global economic response. I think that both the principles and the commitments of the GCM should emphasise the link between economic cooperation and cooperation on migration. There are many things we can do in this respect: address the youth bulge in developing countries; provide investment and venture capital; promote intelligent return policies which combine readmission with reintegration and investment; or promote skills development on emerging labour markets.

This will help our non-European partners to solve their most burning challenges; and it will motivate them to help us when it comes to solving our own. I think that if such cooperation is based on concrete needs and is conducted in a spirit of reciprocity and partnership, this will be the best way of ensuring that the commitments of the global compact will be followed up by concrete action in partnership between countries of origin, transit and destination.

The EU and its Member States have established a number of instruments, which carry this spirit, such as the New Migration Partnership Framework, The Valletta Action Plan and its Trust Fund, the External Investment Plan, to mention just a few examples. I am convinced that we in Europe need to build solid regional migration partnerships with countries along relevant migratory routes that will enable us to better manage migration and to address migratory movements, including border management and return.

With a view to follow up and implementation, we require a strong regional architecture which enables regional migration processes and frameworks to address regional priorities and challenges.

The EU supports a number of migration processes and dialogues which avail of long-term experience and know-how in bridging gaps and bringing together countries with different interests, views and perceptions. This is of course also the approach of ICMPD in our support for the Rabat and Khartoum Process, the Budapest Process and the follow-up of the Valletta Summit. And I am convinced that this will also be the approach of the global compact as well.

Such regional implementation mechanism could be modelled on the well-established EU funded MIEUX Initiative, the Migration EU Expertise Initiative, which is delivering migration

management support to our partner countries across the globe since a decade using mainly EU expertise from EU MS administrations. The EU avails of a variety of well-tested partnership and delivery mechanisms which should be brought to operate also in follow up to the Global Compact for Migration.

Last but not least, from an EU perspective it is important to place a special focus on the countries in South Eastern Europe / Western Balkans. The recent migration crisis has reminded us of the urgency to include the countries in the region in a European migration architecture so as to ensure that we close those gaps which have contributed to the vulnerabilities that we were faced with.

Ladies and gentlemen, I think that our host has said it best. At the occasion of the Preparatory Meeting for the GCM in Mexico last December, Bulgaria stated that the global compact should be based on four principles. It should be people-centred; comprehensive; context-specific and prevention-focused. I think that economic cooperation, partnership approaches and a regional dimension will be crucial to put these principles into action. And this will be a key factor for the success of the global compact as a whole. ICMPD has supported this dimension since 25 years. And we will continue to do so for the next 25 years.

Thank you.