

“International Conference on Peace-Making and Conflict Management”

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Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me start with a basic observation. The issue of migration is linked very closely to the issues of conflict, conflict management and sustainable peace. And although the public debate often suggests that migration, or certain types of migration, are a challenge for security, in reality it is rather the other way around. The lack of peace and security are one of the main reasons for migration and migrants are among the first to suffer from a lack of security.

When we look at the main drivers of international migration, we can identify as the most important ones 1) war, civil war and conflict; 2) economic and wage disparities; 3) socio-economic development in developing countries which enables people to migrate more than ever before; and 4) demographic imbalances that result in movements from poor and young regions to rich and older regions. None of these factors will go away any time soon. On the contrary, they will become more significant. I do not think that we will experience the catastrophic scenarios our media like to predict, but we can definitely expect an increasing demand for migration and big challenges that we have to cope with.

The newest estimates speak about a total 258 million international migrants, this is 14 million more than one year ago. Migrants represent 3.5 percent of the world population, which is surprisingly little when you think about the impact of the drivers I have mentioned before. The majority of them move in a voluntary and regular manner. But a large minority does not, or cannot move in such a way. Currently, conflict-induced migration has to be our biggest concern. The latest estimates speak about more than 67 million refugees, displaced or internally displaced. In this regard it is important to know that it is especially the category of internally displaced which has grown dramatically in recent years. The number of refugees - that is persons who had to flee from war or persecution to another country – is almost the same as 25 years ago. But the number of persons who had to flee but stayed in their own country has increased by nine times over the same period, from 5 to 36 million persons.

Flight and displacement were also the main causes for the so called refugee crisis that hit Europe in 2015. More than 2.5 million persons have applied for asylum in the EU in 2015 and

2016, most of them originating from Syria, Afghanistan or Iraq but also from conflict ridden countries in Africa. In 2017 we saw a significant reduction in numbers, but by the end of the year it were still more than 700,000 new applications for asylum. Thus, we need to acknowledge that many non-European countries have a much heavier burden to shoulder than the Europeans. Countries like Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Pakistan or Turkey host between 700,000 and 3 million refugees. Many of them will stay there for long time periods, often without any perspective for integration and gainful economic activity.

The international community has reacted and has started a number of initiatives, both at the global level and regional levels. In the European context there are many examples like the Valletta Declaration and Action Plan to improve cooperation on migration with African countries, the EU Emergency Trust Fund or the Migration Partnership Framework with third countries. At the global level, the most important initiatives are the New York Declaration of September 2016 and the subsequent process on developing the global compacts on migration and on refugees that should be agreed in the second half of 2018. None of these initiatives are undisputed; and none of them will result in new internationally binding norms. But they have set in motion a process that could result in new and enduring structures of cooperation on migration and displacement. This could lead to a new culture of collective action among states, even when they have divergent preferences and interests.

Now, what are the priorities for collective action? In short, I think we have to become better in three main areas; and those areas could be labelled as the “three Ps” – referring to 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. Europe and the whole global community struggle when it comes to solidarity and responsibility sharing, we have to be honest about that. But there is still clear commitment to the Geneva Refugee Convention, to resettlement and to the continuation of the discussion on relocation. And nobody challenges the need to 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 ensure their access to work, education and health care. And we have to get very serious about this.

The second “P” stands for prosperity. We all can agree that safe and orderly migration will only be possible if people are not forced to migrate but have migration as a choice among others in securing their livelihoods and fulfilling their ambitions. In order to achieve this, we need to create more prosperity. And for creating prosperity, we need policies that combine development cooperation, trade, vocational training, mobility, energy, security, institution and capacity building. We need to involve the private sector and increase the financial tools

available. And things are happening: The European Commission, for instance, has established a new External Investment Plan to promote sustainable growth and job creation in Africa. The Plan should focus on fragile states and go beyond classical development assistance by using guarantees to overcome private investment bottlenecks. We need more of this. And we should see these policies also as an investment in new markets for our own goods and services. It would be wonderful to see economic cooperation that is rooted in migration related goals evolve to something much bigger, benefitting all partners and reducing global inequality at the same time.

This brings me to the third “P”, which is partnership between all countries linked by migration. We should see partnership as a policy principle, as a shared commitment, where all partners have rights and obligations, and where all partners are affected equally by benefits and disadvantages. I think the concepts that have emerged in Europe and on the global scale over the last two years reflect the notion of partnership a lot more than past attempts. I think there is a new seriousness and soberness when it comes to the necessity of investing in long-term partnerships in the area of migration.

Finally, and in view of the theme of today’s conference, I would like to add another “P” to the equation, and this fourth “P” refers to “peace” and conflict resolution. It is simple but it is true: Large-scale and spontaneous movements of people are normally caused by conflict, violence and persecution. If the international community would manage to address conflicts earlier and to resolve them before they erupt in violence and mass displacement, our discussion on migration would be a different one. Sustainable peace, as the conference calls for, might seem to be a distant vision. In terms of migration governance, it will be one of the main preconditions for becoming better than we are now. Your insights, thoughts and new ideas are much needed for this. I am sure that we will learn a lot today and tomorrow and wish all of you an interesting and inspiring conference.

Thank you very much.