

## Salzburg Forum Ministerial Conference - Policing in a Connected World

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*Bucharest, 14 June 2018*

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, dear Colleagues,

Allow me, first of all, to express my gratitude for inviting me to attend this Ministerial Conference of the Salzburg Forum. I am honoured to address you today on behalf of an organisation whose membership includes most of the Salzburg Forum states and friends of the Salzburg Forum as well. From the viewpoint of ICMPD, the question of “policing in a connected world” is a very timely and a highly relevant topic.

As an organisation we deal with all aspects of migration and migration policy, with the positive sides as much as with the not so positive ones. Technology has always played an important role for the latter, for organising irregular migration, migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings. We just have to think of altered vehicles to hide smuggled migrants, GPS units to bypass border controls or fake visa to organise the apparently legal entry of irregular migrants. Criminals have always adapted to technical change and integrated new technology in their methods. But what we have seen recently is not just adaptation; it is a real revolution.

We all have been part of this revolution. In 2003 about 10 percent of the world population used the internet, today it is 52 percent. In 2003, 22 percent of the world population had a mobile phone, in African and Asian countries it was only between 5 and 13 percent. Today an average 70 percent of the world population own a mobile phone and in many countries the mobile phone coverage is close to 100 percent. The smart phone provides access to almost unlimited information; it allows for communication over large distances; it allows for sharing and analysing of information between hundreds of thousands of people at any given moment in time. And this affects migration and migration management in a dramatic way.

In 2015 we all witnessed what tremendous impact the IT revolution had on the business of migrant smuggling. Over the years, ICMPD has conducted a lot of research on irregular migration and on how migrant smuggling networks operate. And we found that the organisational structure of these networks and their methods had not changed so much over the last ten, fifteen years. But what had changed completely were the technical means to organise their business.

In the summer of 2015 these networks managed within a few weeks to completely redirect the flows of refugees and other migrants from the Central to the Eastern Mediterranean route. They did not achieve this by implementing a sophisticated masterplan; they achieved this by using mobile phones and social media – Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter.

“Actionable information” is defined as data that is useful for making a decision or solving a problem. “Novel” means that this data has not been reported before at another place. During the so called “migration crisis” migrants and the organisers of migrant smuggling did exactly this. They used novel information that was constantly produced and updated in a decentralised way, at hundreds of different locations and by thousands of individuals who were connected by nothing else than technology. Thus, they were so successful that it led to the temporary breakdown of border control and migration management systems in Europe and to one of the biggest political crises in the history of the EU. It is safe to say that without the internet, without the smart phone, without social media – this would not have happened the way it did; maybe it would not have happened at all.

This leads to a simple conclusion. When smuggling and migrant networks can process millions of communications every hour, in a decentralised and efficient way; law enforcement must be able to do the same. The authorities must find better ways to access and share information and intelligence. This is of course a technical issue and a question of how existing systems can talk to each other. But it is also a question of political will, of the readiness to cooperate and of the readiness to invest in this cooperation.

From the viewpoint of an organisation dealing with migration this investment is an absolute necessity. Only if our law enforcement agencies stay on top in the information game; all of us can stay on top in the game of controlling our borders and of managing migration in a better functioning and in a more beneficial way.

Thank you.