

MRC Afghanistan Inauguration Speech

Dr. Michael Spindelegger, Director General ICMPD

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Excellencies, distinguished guests, dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome you on behalf of the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) to the inauguration of the first Migrant Resource Centre in Afghanistan. This Migrant Resource Centre is a joint collaboration between the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations and my organisation ICMPD. The establishment of this Centre has been made possible through the funding and vision by the European Union, to support the Ministry, the Government of Afghanistan and the people of Afghanistan in a sustainable manner.

Thus, I would like to express my sincere thanks to Minister Balkhi and his dedicated team in the Research and Information Department for the great cooperation and collaboration. And I would also like to thank the European Union for supporting this initiative through the project “Improving Migration Management in the Silk Routes Countries”.

The establishment of this Centre has been long in the making. The idea was first raised in 2013 during the consultations on the Budapest Process Ministerial Declaration on a Silk Routes Partnership for Migration. Afghanistan is among the countries that has been interested in this idea since the beginning and for good reasons. As we all know, Afghanistan has a long migration history and one of the largest refugee populations in the world. According to the UNHCR, out of 19.9 million refugees in the world in 2017, 2.6 million were Afghan nationals. Providing the Afghan people with accurate information about migration as such, and about what legal and labour migration channels exist is crucial for Afghanistan and its citizens. Equally important is to include the aspects of education abroad and the dangers and consequences of irregular migration as well. I am very proud that we get to support the Government of Afghanistan in this endeavour and thankful to the European Union for their support.

We all know that people make decisions on migration that is based on wrong or simply too little information. Better informed people will make better informed decisions. It is as simple as that, and it is the simple aim of this Migrant Resource Centre.

We want to provide clear, accessible and understandable information to potential migrants on possibilities for orderly migration, as well as rules and regulations, including relevant pre-departure information. Raising awareness on the risks and dangers associated with irregular migration is another aim. Considering the large number of returnees, the Centre will also provide information on and referral to reintegration services in the country and will work closely with the respective ministries, civil society, international organisations and media.

Please do visit the Migrant Resource Centre yourselves and share with us what you see. Share with us any information you deem useful, information that could be useful for departing and potential migrants. We have developed several information brochures, a website and social media presence for the MRC. The MRC staff has visited many of you already and will visit key stakeholders in the future to explore partnerships for awareness raising. We are also planning to start information sessions at vocational training institutions, universities and schools as well as other community outreach activities and an information campaign on migration. We would be very happy to cooperate with you on improving the level and quality of the information we provide and on broadening the channels we use to get our information across.

Thank you very much.