

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **First Migrant Resource Centre opened in Afghanistan**

**Migrant Resource Centre being set up and run in Kabul by ICMPD and the Afghan Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations**

**Vienna/Kabul, 04 July 2018:** Afghanistan is second only to Syria in the number of refugees originating from within its borders in recent years. Officially, about 2.5 million refugees have left Afghanistan in the almost four decades of this country being marked by hostilities and terror. The unofficial figure for the number of people who have fled exceeds six million. The majority of them are currently in the neighbouring countries of Pakistan and Iran as well as in Turkey. It is in this context that the first information centre for potential migrants was opened in Kabul, the Afghan capital, this week.

Drawing on its extensive experience with setting up and operating such Migrant Resource Centres (MRCs) in Pakistan, the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) was able to set up the first such centre in Afghanistan in a joint endeavour with the Afghan Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations (MoRR). Its fundamental goal is to provide clear and understandable information on possibilities for orderly migration, as well as rules and regulations, including relevant pre-departure information, to potential migrants. Raising awareness of the risks and dangers associated with irregular migration is another aim of the MRC. These efforts seek to warn potential emigrants about exploitation by organised groups of people smugglers as well as to protect them from human trafficking. Considering the large number of returnees, the Centre will also provide information on reintegration services in the country and will work closely with the respective ministries, civil society, international organisations and the media.

Overall, the Migrant Resource Centre in Kabul assists people in Afghanistan in realistically assessing the opportunities and conditions in the countries of destination; this approach shall result in better-informed people making better-informed decisions. The MRC staff provides information services in Kabul as well as in communities in various regions of Afghanistan, at schools, universities and other government services, such as the offices of passport-issuing authorities.

“We want to save potential emigrants from opting for irregular approaches and thereby

falling into the hands of criminal networks. And we help people to make realistic assessments of the often overrated opportunities and prospects in the countries of destination, particularly in Europe,” Director General ICMPD Michael Spindelegger explained.

Afghanistan’s Minister of Refugees and Repatriation, His Excellency Sayed Alem Balkhi underlined that “migration is an undeniable and inseparable need of human societies. However, we all must strive for regularisation of migration so that migrants, country of origin and countries of destination all benefit from regular solutions.”

The Migrant Resource Centre in Kabul is being set up and run with funding from the European Union as part of the project “Improving Migration Management in the Silk Routes Countries” which is implemented by the ICMPD. The centre is operated by the ICMPD and the Afghan Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations where it is located. There are already two Migrant Resource Centres today in the Pakistani cities of Islamabad and Lahore. Plans for the near future call for further such centres in Bangladesh and Iraq.

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The International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) is an international organisation with 17 Member States and about 300 staff members. Active in more than 90 countries worldwide, it takes a regional approach in its work to create efficient cooperation and partnerships along migration routes. Priority regions include Africa, Central and South Asia, Europe and the Middle East. Its three-pillar approach to migration management – structurally linking policy & research, migration dialogues and capacity building – contributes to better migration policy development worldwide. Founded in 1993, the Vienna-based organisation holds UN observer status and cooperates with more than 200 partners including EU institutions and UN agencies. ICMPD receives funding from its Member States, the European Commission, the UN and other multilateral institutions, as well as bilateral donors.

#### MORE INFORMATION AND INTERVIEW REQUESTS

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