

Vienna Migration Conference 2019

Breaking the gridlock and moving forward: Recommendations for the next five years of EU migration policy, Opening of 2nd day

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Vienna, 22 November 2019

Ministers; Excellencies; Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me welcome all of you to the second day of the 2019 “Vienna Migration Conference” under the title “Breaking the gridlock and moving forward: Recommendations for the next five years of EU migration policy”. For those who could not attend yesterday - it is a great pleasure that you can join us today. For those who were with us already yesterday evening - thank you for being here today as well. I would like to take the opportunity to thank the Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy for hosting us in these wonderful premises already for the second time. It is a real privilege to discuss migration in such a great atmosphere.

The Vienna Migration Conference is of special importance to the work of ICMPD. It is our annual flagship event, which concludes a year of policy-related work and discusses the priorities for the next year. But it is also an event which brings together the different strands we are working on – policy, dialogue and research on migration. We firmly believe that we will not have functioning solutions on migration without ambitious and straightforward policy making. But we also think that these solutions will only work when the policy-making is based on sound analysis and knowledge. And our Vienna Migration Conference tries to bring these aspects together.

This year’s conference started yesterday with a panel of political decision makers, who shared their views on the main political priorities for the next five years. Today we continue with the migration and policy experts, who will discuss the more detailed aspects for making the political priorities work in practice. We want to learn about their views on how we could break the gridlock in European migration policy and what we should do concretely in the next five years.

We want to discuss the related questions in their “internal” and in their “external” dimension. Why did we choose this approach? Of course we know that the internal and external dimensions of EU migration policy are closely linked and that they do not function without each other. In general and when we look at the developments since 2015, we can conclude that the EU has made very good progress in important areas of European migration and refugee policy. We can say this for the volume and quality of the cooperation with non-EU-partners, especially with respect to the economic dimension, the control of external borders, the further institutional

development of the European asylum agency EASO and Frontex, but also when it comes to the capacities of the European return policies. The reform of the “internal dimension”, especially of the Common European Asylum System, was less successful, and the issue of inner European solidarity and responsibility-sharing made no real headway. Political tensions among the EU Member States persist, which also means that some major weaknesses of the system continue to concern us.

If we want to overcome these weaknesses, we have to overcome the current political gridlock first. The EU Member States must find a new commitment towards a common vision, approach and system. We need a reformed European migration agenda that is developed and supported by all partners and has a clear concept of what exactly European migration policy wants to achieve. A clear commitment towards joint solutions will be an essential part of this process.

Ladies and gentlemen, we should not think that the current European migration system is bad or dysfunctional. In many ways it works quite well. But we need to understand that the migration challenge is a big and complex one and requires solutions that go beyond what we have managed to build so far. I am sure that we will hear a lot from our experts today on how such better solutions could look like. I look very much forward to this discussion and wish all of you an interesting and inspiring conference.

And now it is my great pleasure to welcome Wolfgang Peschorn, Federal Minister of the Interior of Austria for his opening remarks.