

25 years of the Budapest Process – opening remarks by Michael Spindelegger

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Director General, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour for me to open tonight's dinner celebrating 25 years of the Budapest Process on behalf of the Secretariat of the Budapest Process together with our friends and partners from Turkey, Hungary and the European Commission; and to welcome all partners participating in the Budapest Process.

As ICMPD we have the great pleasure to celebrate two important anniversaries this year. First, there is the anniversary of 25 years of ICMPD. Twenty-five years ago Austria and Switzerland called into life a small organisation that should advise governments on migration. The fall of the Iron Curtain had marked the beginning of a new era in global politics, but it also marked a new era in the field of migration. We experienced new opportunities and we saw new challenges. Many of them we have addressed successfully, some of them are still with us today.

Two and a half decades later the small expert organisation has developed into a main player in the migration policy field. Today, ICMPD has seventeen Member States and we hope to welcome more in the future. More than 300 ICMPD colleagues work at our Headquarters in Vienna, in our Brussels Mission and in our regional and local offices in many parts of the world.

And of course there is the second anniversary, which is equally important and equally close to us as an organisation. Tonight we celebrate 25 years of the Budapest Process, which makes it the longest-standing migration dialogue in our regional context. The Budapest Process was initiated by Germany in 1991 and started with a group of 27 States. Its official launch was two years later. Under Hungary as its chair, the Process started to grow fast in terms of its member base but also in terms of its relevance. Since 1993 the Budapest Process has organised five ministerial conferences, the latest in Istanbul in 2013, and enhanced its membership to 53 countries and international organisations. During its long history it went through several transformations but always kept its key principles of flexibility, informality and equal level participation. And it is safe to say that its approach is not only the

basis for its own success but also served as a blueprint for many other regional migration dialogues.

Today and despite its long history, the Budapest Process is a “young” migration dialogue. Under its Turkish Chair and Hungarian Co-Chair it underwent a fundamental reorientation over the last years and initiated cooperation with an entirely new group of countries. The Istanbul Declaration from 2013 established the Silk Routes Partnership with the aim to promote dialogue and cooperation on migration among the Silk Routes Partners. Right now we discuss the core documents for the next Ministerial Conference of the Budapest Process in 2019, which should bridge the gap between political agreement and delivery on the ground. We all know that there is no meaningful action without strong political commitment. But we also know that even the strongest political commitment will be meaningless if it is not translated into concrete action. This is never an easy task, but success is even more commendable in the case of the Silk Routes region, with a group of countries linked by migration and displacement in their most complex and challenging forms. Over the last five years, the Silk Routes Partners have managed to maintain and even deepen their cooperation, and can rightfully claim that they have not just discussed but also delivered.

Today and tomorrow provide a great opportunity to deepen and broaden this cooperation, to have frank and honest discussions and to take an important step forward.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Budapest Process is a state-led dialogue. States take the decisions, set the agenda and initiate the activities of the dialogue. As a secretariat, the role of ICMPD has always been to support the chairs and the participating states and organisations in their efforts. We have assumed this role with great pride and are very grateful for the trust you have put in us throughout the years. I want to sincerely thank you for that.

Now let me wish all of you a successful and fruitful Senior Officials Meeting and a relaxed and pleasant dinner tonight.

Thank you very much.