

Budapest Process – Annual Senior Officials Meeting with a special celebration of the 30 years anniversary of the dialogue

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Dear Deputy President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour for me to welcome you today's Senior Officials Meeting on behalf of the Secretariat of the Budapest Process. As ICMPD we have the great pleasure to celebrate two important anniversaries this year. ICMPD has turned thirty, and we had a lot of opportunity to look back upon our history together with many of the friends and partners that have joined us along the way. And many of these conversations referred to a second major landmark, which is of course the 30 years anniversary of the Budapest Process. The history of the Budapest Process and the history of ICMPD are closely interlinked. It is safe to say that we, as ICMPD, would not have grown into the organisation that we are today. We owe a lot to the Budapest Process and are very grateful for your support and cooperation.

When it started in 1993, the dialogue brought together a group of 26 European countries in developing joint migration policy responses to the newly arising challenges and opportunities in the wake of the fall of the Iron Curtain. Since then, the Budapest Process has organised six ministerial conferences, the latest in Istanbul in 2019, and enhanced its membership to 53 countries and international organisations. Today, the Budapest Process is the longest-standing migration dialogue in the wider European context. During its 30 years of existence, it went through several transformations in its geographic and topical coverage but always kept its key principles of flexibility, informality and equal level participation. It successfully opened its scope towards the work on operational results and linked the dialogue with a range of regional projects. And that was an important milestone. In all the years of our work, we have learned one basic thing: there is not concrete action without underlying political dialogue, and conversely, there is no functioning dialogue without operational delivery on the ground. Also in this regard, the Budapest Process served as a blueprint for a number of other regional fora. And its extensive network among state officials served as a springboard for migration dialogues covering new geographic regions.

Despite its long history, the Budapest Process is also a "young" migration dialogue. Under the lead of Türkiye and Hungary as Chair and Co-Chair, it went through a fundamental reorientation 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. The “Istanbul Commitments” and the “Call for Action” adopted in 2019, focused the work of the dialogue on six priority areas: the prevention of irregular migration and the facilitation of return and reintegration, the promotion of legal migration and mobility, the integration of migrants and countering of xenophobia, the link between migration and development, the combatting of human trafficking and the promotion of international protection. Amongst others, the subsequent work resulted in the successful set-up of three thematic working groups on return and reintegration, law enforcement cooperation and legal pathways for migration as key priorities for the Budapest Process.

Now that we reach the end of its five-year cycle, we can proudly conclude that the achievements of the Action Plan are a more than solid foundation for paving the way for a new chapter in the history of the Budapest Process. Based on these results, next year’s Ministerial Conference will be able to discuss the endorsement of a number of excellent proposals presented by the Chairmanship, amongst others the invitation to new countries to join the dialogue and the calibration of priority areas in view of important global and regional developments.

Today and tomorrow provide a great opportunity to deepen and broaden the debate, to have frank and honest discussions and to take an important step forward in the preparation of the Ministerial Conference 2024.

Ladies and Gentlemen, let me conclude with an important remark. Throughout its history, the Budapest Process has always maintained its core principle: It 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 the Chairmanship and all partners of the Budapest Process for their trust and support. And I want to assure you of the full commitment of the secretariat and the whole ICMPD towards the principles, plans and priorities that will form the next successful chapter in the history of the Budapest Process.

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.