

## Ministerial Conference of the Salzburg Forum Working Session II “Migration and Smuggling”

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Dear Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Distinguished Colleagues and Friends,  
Let me, first of all, thank you for inviting me to attend this conference and to share a few words on its important topic. Today, the European migration environment and security situations are deeply affected by human smuggling and the professional organisers of irregular migration flows. Their actions result in high numbers of irregular arrivals; but they also erode our citizens’ trust in functioning migration governance, ensure huge financial gains for criminal networks and provide a tool for state actors to put political pressure on European governments.

Human smuggling relies on cooperation between the organisers across national borders. And it relies on weaknesses and loopholes in our asylum and migration systems. Consequently, a successful counter-strategy must rest on three pillars.

First, it must enhance the means of law enforcement with a strong focus on regional and international cooperation. The envisaged strengthening of the role of Europol in the fight against human smuggling, for instance by enabling the agency to deploy staff also to non-EU partners, is an important step to this end.

Second, it must address the weaknesses in our systems. Enhanced capacities of all partners along migratory routes to control borders, conduct asylum procedures and effect returns will close these loopholes and seriously hurt the business model of the smuggling networks.

The third pillar is closely linked to this, namely the capacity to work with partners outside Europe. The fight against migrant smuggling must involve the countries of origin and transit outside Europe as partners in tackling the organisers, in controlling flows, in enabling returns but also in reaching out to migrants. In our migrant resource centres, two of them were recently opened in Iraq and Pakistan, our ICMPD colleagues inform about legal migration opportunities and the dangers of irregular migration. We see a high use of the centres among our target group and are firmly convinced that providing easy-to-get, honest and sound information for migrants is an important tool to weaken the market position of smuggling networks.

Dear colleagues, the recently adopted EU Pact on Migration and Asylum provides a great opportunity to reinforce our work on all these priorities. In the last ICMPD Steering Group meeting, our Member States agreed to work together very closely on the implementation of the Pact. As ICMPD we are fully committed to support this work with all our expertise, networks and resources. I am convinced that the Member States of the Salzburg Forum will engage very strongly in this process as well and look very much forward to our cooperation.

Thank you.