Distinguished Ministers,
Your Excellencies,
Esteemed Representatives of States and International Organisations,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am honoured to speak here, in this beautiful city, hosted by our dear friends, and the Chair of the Budapest Process, Turkey.

We are here in Istanbul to celebrate not only the 20th anniversary of the Budapest Process, but also to decide upon its future. As most of you might remember, the Budapest Process was created following two Ministerial meetings which took place on the initiative of Germany and Austria in 1991 in Berlin and in 1993 in Budapest. The changes in Central and Eastern Europe created a new political landscape, which also altered the migration realities in Europe.

It was in light of these developments that also ICMPD was created, so also we are celebrating our 20th anniversary this year. And this is not a coincidence. Hosting the Secretariat of the Budapest Process was in fact one of the first tasks of the organisation from 1994 onwards. ICMPD was established as an organisation which should bring countries together; to act as a neutral broker between states. Therefore, it was obvious that ICMPD was asked to work as secretariat to assist the chair of the BP. And still, the facilitation of migration dialogue is, together with research and capacity building, one of the cornerstones of our organisation.

It is also thanks to the vision of my predecessor and the first Director General of ICMPD, Mr. Jonas Widgren that we are gathered together today. He would have been proud to see us today – having once more renewed the Budapest Process and being able to welcome here today our friends and partners from the Silk Routes Region. In his words: “this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship”.
Back to the Budapest Process: While originally starting as a dialogue focused on traditional understanding of source, transit and destination countries, it evolved in recent years to a process which also creates a better understanding of the ‘sub-regional’ migration process, be they in the Balkans, between Russia and its neighbours or indeed WITHIN the Silk Routes regions.

The Process also developed from a more migration control focus to a more comprehensive approach to the issues at hand, acknowledging the positive contribution migrants make to the development of the host countries and countries of origin.

Individual migrants in countries of origin, transit and destination make virtual connections between all of the countries along the migration chains and routes. There are exchanges between family and friends, travel, visits and business endeavours started along these migration chains. As such, having this conference here, in this historic city bridging continents, cultures and civilizations since centuries could not have been more suitable.

Dear Ministers, Dear Colleagues and friends

Informal migration dialogues are certainly one of the most important instruments to create common understanding. They are catalyst to develop advanced knowledge, stimulate concrete actions and facilitate more formal forms of cooperation.

ICMPD has built up its organisation along these same principles:

In addition to our support to migration dialogues, we have established a strong research unit, to analyse migration policies and better understand their impact. And in order to ensure the operational follow up, we have established units on each migration topic, specialised in cooperating with our partners in reaching their migration management objectives.

Today you will adopt one of the most advanced and concrete declarations on migration management ever adopted by such a diverse group of countries. The declaration itself reflects how far the international community has come in understanding each other’s priorities and concerns, and shows that there is indeed a willingness to cooperate on these matters. In the year that the 2nd UN HLD takes place, this is a very positive development.

But we will not stop here:
Dialogue and policy advice already stimulated practical implementation. The Silk Routes Project, supported by The Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and Turkey is an excellent example for this. It has been focusing on concrete needs of the participating countries and translates those needs and priorities into concrete projects. The partnership approach is a fundamental principle not only for the BP, but also for ICMPD.

Dear ministers, ladies and gentlemen,

One of ICMPD’s visions says “MIGRATION IS ABOUT PEOPLE”; the people who move, the people who stay behind and the people who host migrants in their societies.

The Budapest Process and especially today’s declaration has shown that through international cooperation it can indeed contribute to the interests of all these people. I am very proud that my organisation has over the last 20 years been able to contribute actively to this success, and would like to personally thank our Turkish colleagues and friends and my team for their tremendous efforts making today’s event possible.