Keynote speech
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ICMPD Southern Dimension Conference
The role of migration in the development of post-revolution Tunisia

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Your Excellency, Mr. Mohamed Mouldi Kefi
Distinguished colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, friends

I am honoured to be here today among like-minded partners who are equally committed to addressing one of the most pressing and dynamic issues on the global political agenda: the challenges and opportunities of Migration!

And at this point we should keep in our minds that Migration is about people; about those who are on the move, about those who remain and those who receive migrants in their communities. What brings us together today is our collective will and responsibility to find solutions for all those people.

On behalf of the International Centre for Migration Policy Development, allow me, Your Excellency, to join you in welcoming our colleagues and partners to this unique event, upon which the foundations for concrete co-operation between Tunisia and its friends in Europe and elsewhere can be reinforced and promoted.
As an inter-governmental organisation with solid European roots, and as an international institution striving to promote sustainable and future-orientated migration governance, ICMPD re-iterates its belief that migration policy forms a central element of a comprehensive response to the recent events in Tunisia.

In recent months, we have witnessed the extent to which political change in the Mediterranean-Arab region has re-shaped migratory flows, both within the region and into Europe. While the full migration potential is yet to be fully understood and realised in the months and years to come, it is clear that migration constitutes a dynamic and integral variable within the emerging political, economic, and social reality in the region, not least in Tunisia.

It has been this understanding that ICMPD felt compelled to issue a ‘five point plan’ which was to provide the conceptual framework for approaching the aftermath of the revolutionary processes in some of the countries in Arab-Mediterranean, specifically Tunisia. The five-point plan represents the attempt of making migration a positive force for change - for democracy and development as well as for stable and secure circumstances. In the spirit of this plan, I am here today:

**ONE: we need to address the immediate humanitarian concerns** – including (but not limited to) the provision of shelter, medicine and food supplies to cater for the increasing number of migrants who have been fleeing Libya. Equally, there is a need to facilitate their safe return to their countries of origin or their resettlement.

**TWO: we need to prevent the loss of life at sea** – in light of the anticipated increase and intensification of irregular migratory flows across the Mediterranean Sea into Europe.

**THREE: we need to find effective ways to deal with those who arrived by boats on European shores**, despite the inevitable difficulty in accurately foreseeing the actual migration potential during the continuing change (and ongoing conflict in Libya).
FOUR: we need to revisit the Mediterranean Neighbourhood Policy -
Although it is clear that migration does not represent the sole remedy in addressing the underlying challenges in the region, it has an instrumental and positive impact in reshaping perceptions, prospects and solutions within this emerging reality in ‘the New South’. Essentially rooted in socio-economic factors, the unfolding events reaffirm the crucial need to include migration in the overall dialogue within the context of the European Neighbourhood Policy.

And FIVE: we need to create synergies between Migration and Development for the benefit of democratic societies –
Migration can have a positive impact on the development process of countries and societies. Migrants’ remittances, the transfer of know-how and the acquisition of skills, as well as new frameworks for migration partnerships - which could include circular migration and similar arrangements - contribute positively to democratic societies. Therefore migration policies that take development issues into account must form part of the overall approach to the Mediterranean-Arab region.

I am glad to note that most of our points have actually found their way into current initiatives and into current debates.

Distinguished colleagues,
The developments of late 2010 and early 2011 in Tunisia transcended national boundaries and triggered change in other parts of the region; this was in itself an extra-ordinary event of historic proportions. Hundreds of thousands of people arrived at the Tunisian border from Libya since the outbreak of conflict, with immediate and long-term implications to both Tunisia and those people who are stranded at Tunisian border crossing points. Meanwhile, the arrival of thousands of people from the region to European shores in the past 4 months alone has been felt, and efforts to address this have been initiated.

All of this reaffirms our experience that migration often occurs when circumstances undergo profound changes, and it is only with equally-profound (and concerted) efforts of all partners in Europe and the region that such significant challenges can be adequately addressed, channelled and
turned into a positive force. I believe it is this underlying conviction that
determines the pace and purpose of our work in the coming two days here
in Tunis.

Frank and focussed dialogue between partners is the precondition for
understanding each other’s needs and challenges but also for identifying the
inherent opportunities offered by changed circumstances.

In the context of ICMPD’s Southern Dimension, it is the MTM Dialogue that
since almost 10 years fosters trust and mutual understanding and serves as
a platform for cooperation among the neighbours and partners. The MTM
Dialogue – it is fair to say – has proven to be one of the most active and
productive migration dialogues in this region. The MTM is a Dialogue in
Action. It also provides a suitable framework to take our discussions further
on expert levels.

Let our discussions today and tomorrow be guided by this framework and let
us have a dialogue for action.

That is why we are here, and this is what we hope to achieve through this
conference: to look deeper into the needs, the challenges and the
opportunities arising in relation to migration issues in Tunisia, and to provide
an opportunity for open discussions among European and Tunisian partners
in order to identify practical solutions and promote concrete concepts
for practical co-operation.

Ladies and gentlemen,
To achieve these ambitious goals, we must work together with a common
vision and foresight. The movement of people in the past months is certainly
rooted in a complex set of factors which require multi-faceted responses (specifically economic, political and social reforms), of which migration policy forms a central element. It is therefore with certainty that ICMPD advocates a balanced and comprehensive European approach in addressing the emerging migration trends in the Mediterranean-Arab region, particularly in the Tunisian context. Shared prosperity goes hand in hand with shared responsibility.

**Excellency, ladies and gentlemen,**
I would like to end by expressing my utmost appreciation to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to the Diplomatic Institute for Training and Studies, for endorsing our initiative and taking all necessary steps to ensure the active involvement and participation of the Tunisian Government across all sectors. This expression of commitment indeed emphasises the fact that Tunisia of today is ready to pave the way for a sustainable process of development, prosperity and security for all.

My special thanks also go to Switzerland for their generous financial support of this event and also to Switzerland and the Czech Republic for their political support. Last but not least I would like to express my gratefulness to all the administrations and institutions for their active participation and for their readiness to finding effective solutions.

ICMPD remains at the disposal of all partners to provide its expertise and services, with a global approach to migration encompassing the themes that will be addressed in the coming two days.

I thank you all very much for your attention, and I look forward to our fruitful and constructive discussions.