Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Esteemed Colleagues,

I am honoured by your presence with us this evening, to celebrate two decades of ICMPD’s existence! Indeed, it is no coincidence that we have chosen Beirut as one of the key venues outside our headquarters in Vienna to commemorate ICMPD’s 20th anniversary. Our partnership with Lebanon, and for Lebanon, stretches as far back as 2002, constituting one of the pivotal landmarks in our modest journey of cooperation, progress, and achievement in the Arab World.

Dear Friends,

On behalf of ICMPD and its member states, I welcome you to this gathering of like-minded partners, who share a common vision for cooperation in the realm of migration policy development.

As many of you are aware, the International Centre for Migration Policy Development is an intergovernmental organisation which pursues comprehensive, sustainable, and vision-oriented migration governance. This means addressing migration issues with a balanced approach, with long term solutions, and with the guidance of foresight and innovation in tackling emerging challenges.

Since its establishment, ICMPD’s engagement with partners across the globe has been founded on solid knowledge of their priorities and in close partnership with the relevant stakeholders at national, regional, and international levels.

ICMPD was founded in 1993 upon the initiative of Austria and Switzerland, against the backdrop of the emerging challenges and opportunities posed by a changing European political landscape. Today, ICMPD’s expanding family of member states includes: Bosnia and
Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Sweden.

This expansion of ICMPD’s platform testifies to the relevance of (and need for) coherent migration policies in a constantly evolving political, economic, and security climate in our global village.

Today, much like Europe in the early 1990s, the Middle East finds itself at yet another crossroads. Competing political orientations, emerging economic challenges, and pressing security concerns have all contributed (and will continue to contribute) to the movement of people in one way or another. ICMPD’s role is largely to support states in addressing such migration trends with avant garde technical expertise.

We understand these challenges, and we are here to extend a helping hand in addressing your concerns, and in sharing your burdens, in a spirit of equal partnership.

Distinguished Colleagues,

While I did not intend to speak much during what is essentially our “BIRTHDAY PARTY!!!,” I believe that I can capture your attention for a few more minutes to shed light on the work we have done in Lebanon in the past 11 years, in the hope that drawing on the experiences of the past will help us in paving the way for the future of our cooperation.

ICMPD has worked in Lebanon, and with Lebanon, (specifically in cooperation with the DGSG) since 2002, starting with the activities of ICMPD’s Mediterranean Transit Migration Dialogue (MTM), in which Lebanon has taken a central and active part.

Lebanon has also been a participant since early 2012 in the EU-financed EUROMED Migration III initiative, of which ICMPD is the consortium leader. The project aims to foster cooperation on migratory issues between the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) South partner countries and EU countries, as well as among ENPI South partner countries themselves.

ICMPD has had permanent presence in Beirut since 2005. In 2009, cooperation between ICMPD and Lebanon had evolved positively into concrete technical collaboration, whereby ICMPD fostered the following support for Lebanon in various migration sub-fields:
- **capacity building** for Lebanese authorities relevant to migration
- **information exchange** between Lebanese officials and their European counterparts
- **infrastructural support** to relevant Lebanese authorities
- **setting standards and procedures** for Lebanon in the various sub-fields of migration,

To mention but a few examples of ICMPD’s concrete initiatives that upheld these support mechanisms in Lebanon, I would like to acknowledge the following operational projects:
- “Strengthening Reception and Detention Capacities in Lebanon (**STREDECA**) financed by the EU
- “Training to Enhance Lebanese Anti-trafficking Effort (**TELAE**)” financed by the US.

And most recently, with the generous support of the EU, the project “Developing National Capability for Integrated Border Management in Lebanon (**IBM LEBANON**)” ranks high in terms of ICMPD’s operational engagement with Lebanon. Launched one year ago, the project provides support to the Lebanese authorities to secure and control the borders in accordance with national and international IBM standards, thus increasing the security of its citizens, promoting regional stability and facilitating trade, development and human contact.

Dear Friends, Dear Colleagues,

I take this opportunity to thank you all once again for your efforts, and to distinguish Ambassador Angelina Eichhorst on behalf of the EU for her continuous support, and Minister Manjian on behalf of Lebanon for his unwavering commitment to the success of our endeavours.

On behalf of ICMPD, I look fondly at our past in Lebanon, but I equally look forward to the future of our cooperation, and here there are no words more fitting to end with than the words of Lebanon’s own son, Jibran Khalil Jibran, who said: **Yesterday is but today’s memory, and tomorrow is but today’s dream.**

Thank you very much for your attention. Enjoy your dinner.