Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, distinguished colleagues,

Some 15 months ago, Valletta Partners agreed, “that [their] first priority [was] to save lives and do everything necessary to protect the migrants whose lives [were] at risk”. This primary imperative remains as we re-convene here today considering the number of migrants disappearing and dying in the desert and on the sea. At the Valletta Summit, Partners committed “to respond decisively and together manage flows in all their aspects, guided by the principles of solidarity, partnership and shared responsibility”.

ICMPD has since played a central role in facilitating and supporting the Rabat Process and the Khartoum Process to take on the roles assigned at the Summit and to monitor progress in the implementation of the Action Plan. In this process, both have re-confirmed their vitality and importance. Recognising the individual and collective efforts of all partners, and with reference to the two individual Reports and joint Conclusions, I would like to underline three aspects that, from ICMPD’s perspective, will determine our collective ability to live up to Valletta commitments in the long run:

First, there can be no successful cooperation on migration without genuine partnership; that is a partnership nurtured by trust, understanding and joint ownership with due consideration for diverging interests and constraints. Despite sometimes divergent positions, there may be more common ground than we might think. Both European and African States strive to promote more effective responses through policy harmonisation and the facilitation of free movement. In pursuing these essential goals, they do face similar challenges regarding cohesion and safeguarding their acquis or making regulatory progress. We should exploit the common ground more effectively.

Second, response strategies need to remain balanced and aim at the long-term, while addressing urgent challenges. Differing and divergent priorities and concerns have equal legitimacy to not only be reflected but also implemented within the Valletta framework. To date, considerable efforts have been put into addressing the
so-called root causes of irregular migration. Investments for inclusive growth and employment, particularly of the youth are essential. We need to recognise however that root causes are not only economic in nature. They often are also related to questions of democracy, the rule of law, including human rights and good governance. Root causes also lie in pull factors, such as for instance the demand side of irregular migration, or unsuitable frameworks for moving regularly.

Thirdly, accountability for results is essential. Yet more thinking is required to agree on the meaning of success in the Valletta Framework. Addressing often intertwined development and security challenges is a complex and long-term endeavour. It is also a goal in itself, irrespective of its migration implications. And while Valletta rightly strives to propose “comprehensive” responses, there is also a need to uphold the respective objectives and temporalities of distinct policies, such as humanitarian or development policies, and deliver against those.

AU EU migration partnerships, the Valletta framework including the Khartoum Process and Rabat Process, should in themselves be blueprints for the two global compacts – the one for safe, orderly and regular migration and the other for refuges. And, in a way, they will be.

Let me conclude: the road ahead to fully translate the letter and the spirit of Valletta into reality remains steep. Yet failure is not an option. The risk of losing public confidence in our capacity to create safe, orderly and regular migration is real. The political consequences will be dramatic.

I thank you for your kind attention.

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