

15th COORDINATION MEETING ON MIGRATION

Lukas Gehrke – Director Policy, Research Strategy

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Check speech against delivery

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I will look at the issue of challenges and opportunities from a European perspective, which I believe is symptomatic to some extent, and highlights the overall challenges and opportunities associated with the processes ahead of us. I will do so by referring to the key outcomes of the Vienna Migration Conference (VMC) which ICMPD organised in November 2016 to discuss the consequences of the New York Declaration and the processes leading to the global compacts with politicians, decision makers, researchers, civil society and media representatives.

Europe's economic, social, geographical and political situation does not allow for an unlimited liberalisation of global mobility at the same time, it doesn't allow for a full restriction either; what European migration policy needs, is an equal partnership between sometimes quite different partners.

We all know that the last two years have been particularly challenging for Europe: more than 1 million asylum seekers in 2015 and again in 2016, combined with a very uneven distribution of refugees and asylum seekers as well as an unacceptable death toll – and the regulatory framework in disarray. And although everybody in Europe acknowledges that countries like Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, Kenya, Pakistan or Turkey have a much heavier burden to shoulder European governments had and continue to have a hard time convincing their populations to engage more strongly in refugee protection on European soil or to agree on an intra-European mechanism for responsibility sharing.

My point here is that much of the experience of the last two years was one of unsafe, disorderly and partially irregular movements and corresponding responses – which is a key regulatory objective of the global compacts.

In the world's most integrated region, this situation has led to a corrosive dynamic that threatens to destroy its fundamental freedoms, by individual countries resorting to unilateral, uncoordinated short-term measures.

At the same time, there are great efforts invested into re-establishing functioning regional frameworks based on cooperation and solidarity, recognising that when it comes to migration there is ultimately no other way. However, a clear

consensus on what this could practically mean has not been reached yet, and will be in the making for quite some time.

By extension, any regional approach must be integrated into an effective global framework. Europe will not be able to solve its challenges without global solidarity, without global responsibility sharing and without a clear global sense of direction. Conversely, without European engagement it will be very difficult to translate into action what was concluded in New York in September.

This fact was also widely confirmed during the Vienna Migration Conference. So, what did we conclude? We have to become better in three areas: in *protection, prosperity and partnership*.

Let us start with **protection**. We know we must not mix up refugees and displacement with other types of migration. But we also know that durable solutions in the area of protection are a precondition for making progress in other areas of migration. So, while Europe still struggles with solidarity and responsibility sharing the VMC showed a clear commitment to the Geneva Refugee Convention; to resettlement and to the continuation of the discussion on relocation within Europe. Decision makers at the VMC also underlined the necessity to significantly stepping up the support for refugee hosting countries and communities as well as to ensuring the resilience of refugees. The point here

is the inter-connectedness between refugee protection and migration governance

The second “P” stands for **prosperity**. Decision makers agreed that safe, orderly and regular migration will only be possible if people are not forced to migrate but have migration as a choice among many in securing their livelihoods and fulfilling their ambitions. In order to achieve this, we need to spare no efforts in creating more prosperity.

To this end, we need to make use of the full spectrum of policy domains, we need bold initiatives that enable much larger private investments and among others tap into private sector creativity, know-how and entrepreneurial spirit.

The good news is, things are happening: In September 2016, the European Commission, for instance, proposed the establishment of a new External Investment Plan to promote sustainable growth and job creation in Africa – a plan that aims to leverage more than € 40 billions, and there are more such initiatives on the level of EU MS.

It is encouraging to see economic cooperation that was rooted in migration related goals, evolve to something so much bigger, benefitting all partners and reducing global inequality at the same time.

When it comes to migration as such, we have to be aware of one aspect. Europe does not have large low wage labour

markets; European labour markets are highly specialised, highly formalised and highly regulated. Today, there is a yawning mismatch between the formal skills required on European labour markets and the formal skills sets that many of the prospective migrants have. This also implies that much of the needed foreign labour is pushed to the informal sector which contributes to unsafe, disorderly and irregular migration; exactly the opposite of what we want to achieve. But Europe will not lower its standards and requirements any time soon. The only chance therefore is to enhance the skills of labour migrants on the basis of joint and mutually agreed vocational training standards as a pre-condition for labour migration to Europe.

This brings me to the third “P”, which is **partnership**. I think it is obvious to all of us that partnership is not something you preach, something you only put on paper, something you ask for when it suits you – partnership is something you have to practice and something you have to build. There is a lot of talk about partnerships, especially in the field of migration, but not too many of these debates bother with clearly defining what a “partnership” is or should be.

Well, partnership should be seen as a shared commitment, where all partners have rights and obligations, and where all partners are affected equally by the benefits and burden arising from the partnership.

I think the instruments and initiatives that have emerged in Europe over the last eighteen months reflect a new determination when it comes to investing in long-term partnerships rather than cutting short-term deals – the Valletta Framework and the EUTF, the EIP, the New Partnership Framework are testimony to this (they are yet to produce the transformation we are looking for).

Beyond this type of partnership, European governments need to renew the partnership with their voters. Confidence needs to be reestablished in the ability of the elected leaders to create safe, orderly and regular migration. Otherwise, we will see the consequences coming from the ballot box which could significantly limit our ability to effectively regulate and manage migration in a mutually beneficial way. And there is a string of elections in Europe this year. These elections will not only decide about the future of Europe's policy on international protection and migration; they will also decide about the future of the European Union as such.

It would be a peculiar irony of history, if European States would put in question the existence of their institutionalised framework of partnership and cooperation which the EU represents because of migration; only to rediscover later on that they need exactly this institutionalised cooperation to address their own domestic challenges. How much more difficult would the establishment of a global regime based on global solidarity and

responsibility sharing be when key regions in different corners of the world revoke the very basis on which partnerships are built. I think the answers to this question is quite obvious.

In view of this, partnership will be one of the overriding themes of ICMPD's work in 2017; partnership on migration, within Europe, between Europe and its neighbours and the regions it is connected to through migration; between Europe and the global community at large, as well as – very importantly - between Europe and the European voters to contribute to safe, orderly and regular migration.

I thank you for your attention.