Conference Report

“Europe-Asia Cooperation on Migration”

PARIS, FRANCE, 15 MAY, 2013
On 15 May 2013, the EU-Asia Dialogue held a policy panel on “Europe-Asia Cooperation on Migration” in Paris, France. The full-day event was attended by 21 experts, academics and policy-makers from Europe and Asia. The focus of the discussion was on how the dialogue with Europe and Asia is framed in Asia and Europe respectively as well as on forthcoming challenges in the field of migration.

The meeting was opened by Wilhem Hofmeister, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Singapore, and Yves Pascouau, European Policy Centre, Belgium, who stressed the importance of promoting and sustaining dialogue and sharing of best practices between Europe and Asia on rapidly evolving and politically-sensitive issues such as migration trends and policies.

Session 1: How is the Dialogue with Asian Partners Framed in the EU?

The event was inaugurated by a presentation by Tim Howe, International Organization for Migration (IOM), Switzerland. Mr. Howe addressed the issue of ‘Regional and Interregional Discussion Forums Involving the European Union’, starting with an analysis of the emergence of regional, inter-state consultation mechanisms. In that respect, he observed that bottom-up measures have generally prevailed in international cooperation over migration and that such phenomena have concerned the regional level in particular. Since the mid-1990s, states have increasingly developed mechanisms known as ‘Regional Consultative Processes on Migration’ (RCPs), many of which have been supported by the European Union. He then noted that RCPs tend to avoid most of the usual constraints and bottlenecks affecting inter-state cooperation, due to their informal and non-binding features. RCPs can be defined as ‘restricted information-sharing and discussions forums with an interest in promoting cooperation in the field of migration’ and are a process rather than mere ‘one-off’ events.

He then looked into the geographical distribution of RCPs, stressing that these now exist
in most regions of the world. He also noted that several governments across the world take part in more than one single RCP. Howe then referred to Interregional Discussion Forums (IRF) defining them as growingly diffused, cross-regional consultation mechanisms. A study on the ‘Regional Inter-State Consultation Mechanisms on Migration: Approaches, Recent Activities and Implications for Global Governance of Migration’ found that RCPs diversify in types as they expand in numbers, IRFs often do not have the regular and informal levels of consultation associated with RCPs, RCPs and IRF do not aim at the creation of ‘global governance’ for migration and should, therefore, not be judged on that ground. The study also highlighted that policy coherence is growing amongst countries taking part in well-functioning RCPs and IRFs.

Howe then explored the EU’s role in RCPs and IRFs, noting that the first RCPs were created in Europe or with strong European involvement, like in the case of Intergovernmental Consultations on Migration, Asylum and Refugees (IGC) or the Budapest Process. The European Commission (EC) continues to be a key supporting actor in many RCPs worldwide, increasingly supporting cross-regional cooperation on migration. He then referred to the 2011 EC Communication on the ‘Global Approach to Migration and Mobility’ (GAMM), which recognises Migration and Mobility Dialogues as the fundamental process by which EU migration policy is transposed into its external relations. An example of this is the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Conference of the Directors General of Immigration and Management of Migratory Flows (CDGIMM), where the debate has been focussing on high-skilled labour and student migration issues.

Addressing the issue of Asia-EU cooperation on labour migration, he noted that a formal dialogue was launched in 2008 in the framework of the Colombo Process. This brings together 11 Asian countries (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam) in order to foster dialogue and cooperation on protection and provision of services to overseas temporary contractual workers as well as for optimizing the benefits of organized labour migration, capacity-building, data collection and interstate cooperation. The Dialogue involves the members of the Colombo Process plus EU’s 28 Member States. It aims to improve understanding of key trends and issues, to support the identification of common policy concerns as well as to promote actions facilitating safe and legal labour migration between the two regions and its impact on regional economic as well as social development. He also pointed out that there have been two meetings at a senior official level to date in Brussels, in 2008 and 2011, but further discussions are scheduled for 2014.

Mr. Howe concluded his remarks by addressing whether there is the risk of duplication among RCPs. While a number of Asian states are members of several RCPs (e.g. Abu Dhabi Dialogue, Bali Process, Budapest Process and Colombo Process), these processes actually cover different regions and/or thematic issues, thus, posing little danger of duplication. In order to avoid any duplication, exchange of information and cross-
fertilisation between different inter-state consultation mechanisms is crucial.  

Ágnes Töttős, Ministry of the Interior, Hungary, talked about ‘The National Perspective’ by first presenting the situation in her home country. Having become a member of the Schengen area in late 2007, Hungary is characterised by both outer and inner Schengen borders and happens to be a main transit country for irregular migrants. She noted that, internally, only 2% of the Hungarian resident population is composed of foreign migrants and a large majority of that is made up of migrants of Hungarian ethnic origin, coming from neighbouring states. She nonetheless acknowledged that the rate of migrants from the ‘far abroad’, e.g. from China, has increased in recent times. Thus, the government is working on a migration and integration strategy.

With regard to migration-focused international cooperation, the Budapest Process is a considerable international achievement of the Hungarian government, being the longest standing cooperation framework on migration for Europe and its eastern neighbours. She also highlighted that a third phase was initiated in 2010, which included a ‘Silk Routes Partnership for Migration’. This aims to promote dialogue and mutual cooperation in managing migration flows taking place along the Silk Routes. In addition, Hungary contributed to promoting migration governance within Europe, during the Hungarian Presidency of the European Union in 2011, via some attempts to harmonize Member State legislations on legal migrants. This was pursued through a number of ‘building blocks’ such as the EU Blue Card Directive for highly skilled migrants (2009/50/EC), the Single Permit Directive (2011/98/EU), the Proposal on intra-corporate transferees in 2010 and the Proposal on seasonal workers in 2010.

Considering what cannot be done at the EU level, she argued that preferential rules for certain groups of migrants can be framed, notably for skilled workers (like in the case of Germany) as well as for high net-worth investors (as being currently practiced in Hungary, where the government offers long-term resident status to foreign investors 6 months after an investment of at least 250,000 euro in special state bonds). She also mentioned a number of bilateral agreements based on the historic and economic relationships of Member States; for instance, the working holiday scheme recently agreed upon by Hungary and South Korea.

Ms Töttős concluded her presentation hinting at what can be referred to as a rather ‘fragmented picture’ of migration policies at the national level in Europe. This is the result of a complex interaction between purposes of dialogue, special preferences of EU Member States and the border lines of EU legislation in this politically-sensitive area.

Gauri Khandekar, FRIDE, Belgium, discussed ‘What Role for the EEAS?’ She first looked at the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (GAMM), the above-mentioned overarching framework of the EU external migration policy. She described GAMM as being migrant-centred, addressing both migration and mobility, fully integrating visa and
readmission policies, global in scope, requiring implementation through EU dialogues and cooperation with partner countries.

Looking at the policy and legal framework of the EU in this area, she mentioned with special emphasis the 1999 Tampere Conclusions by the European Council, which highlighted the importance of building partnerships with non-EU countries in the area of migration policy. The 2004 Hague Programme further reinforced this political commitment and paved the way for the adoption of the ‘Global Approach to Migration’ by the European Council in 2005. The Stockholm Programme in 2009 reconfirmed that EU Member States were set to incorporate the ‘Global Approach to Migration’ into EU foreign policy. She said that, as the *acquis communautaire* develops further, the EU is expected to speak with one single voice on its external migration policy as well.

The main objectives of GAMM include four distinct, but interrelated policy areas and aspects: organising and facilitating legal migration and mobility; preventing and reducing irregular migration and trafficking in human beings; maximising the development impacts of migration and mobility; promoting international protection and enhancing the external dimension of asylum policy, both in non-EU and EU countries. Process-wise the implementation of GAMM is driven by migration and mobility dialogues. She explained that, following a bilateral framework-styled approach, Mobility Partnerships (MP) and Common Agendas on Migration and Mobility (CAMM) have been set up. The aim of MPs between the EU and third countries is to facilitate better management of migration flows. CAMMs are an alternative framework which can be upgraded to MPs at a later stage.

After showing a number of data and figures pointing to increasing migration flows from Asia to Europe, she illustrated the institutional architecture of Europe-Asia dialogues on migration, mentioning the ASEM Conference of Directors General of Immigration on Management of Migratory Flows and stressing that the Commission and the EEAS representatives also hold dialogues with various individual countries or regional organizations like ASEAN. In the bilateral events with China a number of developments have taken place, including the signing of an Approved Destination Status (ADS) Agreement in 2004, the start of negotiations over a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement including an article on readmission and visa cooperation in 2007, and the possible launch of an EU-China High-Level Dialogue on Migration and Mobility, which is foreseen in 2014. The EU-India cooperation also put an emphasis on migration-related issues. The EU-India Summit in December 2010 stressed the importance of people movement and the agreement to deepen bilateral cooperation by establishing a regular, comprehensive and structured dialogue on migration issues. The Summit in February 2012 discussed possible ways to facilitate mobility in parallel with preventing and combating irregular migration. Khandekar criticised that the current focus of EU-India dialogue on migration has been limited to setting up a joint working group to enhance cooperation on delivery of consular and visa services, business and tourism, and to
facilitate the movement of people between the regions. She pointed out that the Blue Card – the approved EU-wide work permit allowing high-skilled non-EU citizens to work and live in any country within the European Union - has not worked particularly well, given the rather stringent requirements for high-skilled workers to obtain a ‘fast-track’ visa. These include a work contract offered by an EU employer, proven professional qualifications and work experience, and minimum salary level which has to be at least three times the level of existing minimum wages at a national level. In addition to that, she mentioned a series of aggravating factors including no guarantee of citizenship for the accepted foreign worker, different staying requirements established by each EU Member State, higher taxes compared to the USA, difficult procedures for family reunification, and a limited Asian diaspora in Europe.

Commenting on the place of the EEAS in EU’s external action on migration, Ms. Khandekar showed some scepticism about the actual capability of the new service to play a major role in this area, notably compared with the tasks and functions of European Commission’s DG for Home Affairs, including in the external dimension of the DG’s activities. She nonetheless highlighted that the EEAS could bring added value in the external aspects of migration, acting as a key interlocutor for non-EU countries in this area and creating a more coherent image externally – also through uniform fees for entry visas, an ad hoc role for EU Delegations abroad and more integrated rules across the Schengen area. She then concluded by stating that the Europe 2020 Strategy identifies a clear role for immigration and improved economic integration of migrants in response to labour shortages and demographic decline in Europe. In that context, she said that the EEAS must use its policy overview and expertise to work better both with the other DGs of the European Commission and EU Member States.

The discussion at the end of the session highlighted challenges for the EU. Participants agreed that a common migration policy is necessary, but this requires a single labour market which is strongly opposed by several Member States. A possibility would be to set common rules for admission and implement these domestically; similar to how it was done with border control.

With regard to the Europe-Asia relations, the dialogues are not comprehensive enough and Asia is lacking an equivalent partner for the EU. In addition, the EU appears too organized and pushing, while Asians are surprised that there is still no common policy at the EU level. A possibility to achieve progress is to institutionalize the RCPs and IRFs as this will result in more information-sharing. In order to do so, RCPs have to overcome their fear of opening up to others. The participants did not see the problem of duplication as all these fora have a very distinct character and states need the liberty to interact. There is rather the problem of fragmentation and the difference in powers. Since migration is a multi-level governance issue, a close coordination is necessary.
Session II: How is the Dialogue with the EU Framed in Asia?

Nilim Baruah, Regional Office Asia and the Pacific, International Labour Organization (ILO), Thailand, gave a speech on ‘The Regional Approach: Which Institutions are Involved and to What Extent?’ He first noted that ASEAN member states are currently working through plans for economic integration in the region and have committed themselves to removing all barriers to cross-border movement of goods and services among them by 2015. This has to go together with freer flow of skilled workers and the protection and promotion of the rights of migrant workers.

The directions of labour migration flows in the ASEAN are mainly three-fold: to the Gulf Cooperation Council countries; to and within the ASEAN region; and to Northeast Asia. Due to strong economic growth most movements are intra-regional and occur under temporary migration regimes as well as for less skilled work. Southeast Asian countries comprise labour-sending countries with relatively well-developed legislation and mechanisms to govern labour migration (e.g. Philippines, Indonesia and Vietnam) as well as countries which are fairly new to organized labour migration (e.g. Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar). He also explained that ASEAN has recognized the importance of labour migration in the region and has therefore included the issue into two of its three Blueprints, i.e. the Economic Community Blueprint and the Social-Cultural Community Blueprint.

The driving forces behind labour migration in the region and beyond are economic growth, labour shortages and wage differences between countries of origin and destination. Particularly the demographic development will be an important factor driving labour migration as labour force growth is projected to be low or declining in many countries of destination in the next decade, while keeping medium or high in countries of origin.

Addressing policy responses, Baruah observed that ASEAN countries have adopted three different approaches to labour mobility and admission policy. While countries of destination have developed temporary labour migration regimes for low-skilled migration and have often entered into bilateral agreements or Memorandums of Understanding with the countries of origin (e.g. in Thailand, Malaysia and Korea), ASEAN as a whole is moving towards free movement of professionals. While low and semi-skilled labour migration in ASEAN member states is managed by national regimes and bilateral agreements, the ASEAN Economic Blueprint aims at the free flow of skilled labour, starting with Mutual Recognition Arrangements (MRAs) for recognition of professional qualifications in some priority sectors. Plans in labour mobility also include facilitation of visa-issuing and employment passes for ASEAN professionals as well as an increase in mobility both for professors and students within the ASEAN University Network.

He also addressed the question of the protection of foreign workers, noting that abuses during recruitment and employment are quite common in the region. Thus, ILO has
recently promoted a specific Convention on Domestic Workers, adopted in 2011. Despite ratification of some international standards and the recognition of the importance of the issue in ASEAN, many significant problems remain for migrant workers in Southeast Asia. These span from strictly tying of migrant workers to employers (which makes workers vulnerable to abuse and pushes them to become undocumented) to varying public attitudes towards low-skilled migrant workers in destination countries. The ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers, adopted in 2007, puts forward the obligations of the sending (e.g. providing sustainable alternatives to migration, or framing appropriate repatriation and reintegration policies) as well as receiving countries (e.g. protection of fundamental human rights, or decent working and living conditions for migrant workers) and the commitments of the entire ASEAN community in protecting and promoting the rights of migrant workers. In addition, an ASEAN Committee on the Implementation of the Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers (ACMW) was established in 2008, being tasked with the development of an ASEAN instrument on the protection and promotion of the rights of migrant workers, whose drafting should be completed by 2014. ACMW also convenes the ASEAN Forum on Migrant Labour on an annual basis.

Mr Baruah concluded his remarks by identifying some areas of potential knowledge and experience-transfer in regional labour migration governance between Asia and the EU. These include: assessing labour market requirements for foreign workers; recognition of qualifications and skills; access to employment for admitted migrant workers; multilateral and bilateral social security agreements; EU Directives to improve the position of third-country nationals; as well as social dialogue and the role of trade unions and employer organizations.

Graziano Battistella, Scalabrini Migration Center, Philippines, gave a presentation about ‘Irregular Migration and the Protection of Migrants’ Rights in Asia’. He highlighted that irregular migration is present in each immigration country and thus, also in Asia. He then examined the different typologies of irregularities related to labour migration. Based on the specific moment of the ‘migration cycle’, irregularities can arise during the recruitment phase, be it by intermediaries (i.e. due to advertisement without job orders, forging documents, providing wrong information, contract substitution) or by migrants themselves (e.g. by relying on unlicensed recruiters, forging documents, or providing the wrong information). When it comes to exit and transport, irregular practices may be generated due to ‘back-door exit’ activities and inadequate transportation by intermediaries or by the use of irregular channels by migrants themselves. Irregularities can also happen when migrants enter destination countries. This concerns human trafficking and admission without documentation by intermediaries and migrants’ spontaneous acts such as border-crossing avoiding checkpoints or destroying documents.
During their residence, irregularities can be committed through housing discrimination or by providing lodging to irregular migrants. When it comes to employment, intermediaries can breach the law by hiring workers without proper documentation, placing workers with a different employer or in a different occupation or by confiscating documents. Migrants can give rise to irregularities when working without permits, for a different employer or in a different occupation. When return is concerned, intermediaries may cause irregularities by not granting a return clearance or not providing a return ticket. By the same token migrants can commit irregularities by over-staying after visa expiration.

Battistella then provided an interpretation of irregular migration as a distorted, or rational, response to the demand for migrant workers and to migration pressures which utilize irregular channels because regular ones are too restricted, costly or slow in taking migrants to their destination. Irregular migration may be, in that view, a by-product of migration laws which can make regular migration irregular and vice-versa, incongruence between market demands and policy demands, irregular functioning of labour markets (informal economy), limited cooperation between origin, transit and destination countries. Looking at policies against unauthorized migration, he listed a number of practices such as anti-illegal recruitment campaigns, penalties against officers and intermediaries, action against smugglers and traffickers, border controls and surveillance, sanctions against employers hiring irregular migrants or people lodging irregular migrants, elevating irregular migration to a crime, agreements for the return of irregular migrants or amnesties and registrations. He criticised such policies by highlighting that they target migrants, intermediaries and employers, but do not tackle macro and proximate factors. There is also a lack of coordination among the different policies.

On an international level, the legal framework aiming at the protection of the rights of migrants includes the UN Migrant Workers Convention as well as ILO’s Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention. Such universal conventions encountered little ratification in Asia, although some regulatory convergence in the region is developing through Asian countries’ commitment to a number of international tools and instruments such as the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. When it comes to the regional context, Battistella referred to some regional conventions such as the 1999 Bangkok Declaration and a series of ASEAN Declarations, including the one on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers. He also underlined the ‘additional cooperation layer’ provided by consultative processes such as Bali and Colombo as well as the bilateral approach used by most countries in this area as increasingly widespread, parallel tools.

Mr. Battistella concluded his speech by enumerating a number of steps for the way forward in Asia. These include cooperation on regulating the private sector as well as on the certification of contracts, providing migrants with the possibility for representation, allowing for long-term migration, working towards a system of reciprocity on social
protection, cooperating for the reintegration of migrants, and setting up a ‘firewall’ between migration status-related practicalities and other administrative procedures.

The discussion showed that even asylum-seekers and refugees are treated as irregular migrants which is a reason for the high numbers in some Asian countries. It was highlighted that MoUs and inter-state trade union agreements play a more important role in Asia. However, at the same time ethnic migrant groups/associations are still stronger and more effective. Another problem in Asia is the lack of policies for long-term residents and the question of portability of social services; for instance, retirement payments and insurance in case of a work accident. These are all questions of temporary migration, a topic that is hardly addressed in Asia. In order to limit the power of the agencies, the Korean approach of a stronger government-to-government strategy is very promising. This will also make migration cheaper for the migrants and thus, reduce irregular migration. The recruitment costs can be lowered if the fees are paid by the employer and not the employee which would make perfect sense since the employer has the demand.

The EU currently has two main problems. Firstly, it has developed a negative attitude towards migration during the crisis and secondly, it is perceived as having double standards. While laws are in place, the implementation is very weak. This limits its influence as Asian partners are not willing to accept the EU’s comments due to the lack of own action.

**Session III: Forthcoming Global Challenges**

*Catherine Withol de Wenden*, CERI/Sciences-Po, France, presented major trends and problems related to migration worldwide. In particular, migration to the South as well as internal migration flows between the less developed countries will have severe implications on migration policies and Diaspora. Wenden said that growing urbanization, a result of such movements, will be caused by, among others, environmental change and economic improvements of several countries. She highlighted that the main questions is how this global migration can be managed. While the G8 and G20 have so far missed to address the issue of migration, regional agreements are debating more intensively on mobility. Wenden concluded that the best strategy to manage migration is fighting the push factors in the home countries such as inequality and disadvantages.

*Jean-Christophe Dumont*, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), France, discussed forthcoming challenges for Asia and Europe. According to him, the very diverse region of Asia faces three challenges. First, the demographic transition results in shortages on the labour and marriage market. Secondly, the migration transition which means that most migration will not be temporary anymore. This has an
impact on integration and citizenship. Thirdly, the economic transition will change the context. While some countries will move up the value chain due to income increment, they still have a need for low skilled workers which can be met qua migration. However, this migration process has to be more beneficial to development in the sending countries. With regard to the EU, Dumont identified two key challenges. On the one hand, he saw a growing competition between Europe and Asia. Europe has currently many migrants from Asia and the high skilled ones are fairly well integrated. At the same time, Asian countries are becoming more attractive to Europeans and thus, in the future both regions will compete for the best talents. On the other hand, the second challenge is the relationship between sending and receiving countries. Dumont recognized a growing demand from Asia for rights for their citizens and easier visa regulations. Therefore, the EU will have to open its system.

Imelda Nicolas, Commission on Filipinos Overseas, Philippines, provided an Asian perspective on the forthcoming challenges. She highlighted that some of the key issues are already addressed by the EU-Asia Dialogue:

- intra-regional migration in Asia is dominated by labour migration to the more economically advanced countries, therefore leading to the bigger problem of irregular migration of low-skilled workers;
- receiving countries attract high-skilled workers and professionals, which could lead to severe brain-drain in sending countries, in turn calling for agreements on mutual recognition of foreign qualifications;
- Europe can expect pressure from Asia for greater protection of migrant workers and promotion of the rights of irregular migrants, to be possibly translated into bilateral and regional cooperation agreements;
- the need for Asian countries to put in place measures to minimize the cost of migration and lessen its negative effects;
- the fact that both EU and Asia face the problem of reaching binding regional agreements, most of which focus on labour migrants but do ignore irregular migrants, refugees and trafficked individuals;
- need for more transfer of qualifications across borders and for grasping the potential for setting a ‘clearing house’ to determine level and quality of qualifications;
- the need for both regions to foster a policy-research exchange.

She also took the occasion to mention some key recommendations which emerged from a conference on ‘Advancing Regional Cooperation on International Migration among the Southeast Asian Countries’, which was organised in Manila by the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO), in December 2012. These consist of: mapping out the common recommendations and action plans coming out of the various regional processes and
proposing a mechanism for monitoring the progress of recommendations; reviewing the outputs and status of the ASEAN-organized mechanisms since the 2007 ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers; setting a number of common targets and commitments for dialogue and cooperation within the existing cooperation frameworks, including a list of specific actions and support measures; and increasing the scope of practical cooperation related to migration and development. These may include creation or improvement of the knowledge-base of migration flows of all kinds, or building legal and administrative capacities to monitor and manage migration. Ms Nicolas concluded her presentation by offering a range of specific themes for regional cooperation and action. These include: sharing of policies and approaches facilitating transfer of remittances through the banking system; sharing and exchanging of experiences and programs dealing with overseas populations; encouraging more discussions on the return and reintegration of migrants; fostering shared concern among countries of origin on the protection of their nationals; proving and sharing more data on return migration for all countries of origin; as well as establishing structures similar to those of various EU migration-related ones.

The open discussion at the end of the session highlighted several important aspects. So far there has been no proof of the migration-development nexus. Most sending countries are still not experiencing much improvement, but become very dependent on the remittances. In this context the loss of manpower has an impact on the costs for the home country since the emigrants cannot contribute to the financing of education, social services and government investments through taxes. The EU can learn especially from Asia’s experience of bilateral agreements to improve management of migration. However, while the migrants’ rights are mostly granted within the EU, the admission is the key problem which causes irregular migration to Europe. Due to the problem of skills recognition a severe problem is brain wastage as a result of mismatches between a migrant’s education and the actual work.

Session IV: Which Topics to Prioritise in the Future Cooperation between Europe and Asia and with which Tools?

Cecilia Lundstroem Carniel, International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), Austria, spoke about a ‘Priority topics and tools for migration cooperation’. She presented the Budapest Process and described its three, consecutive development phases, the last of which was initiated by Turkey and entailed cooperation with the ‘Silk Routes’ countries. She then described the ‘Silk Routes Partnership for Migration’, which – having been established by the Istanbul Ministerial Declaration in April 2013 – has the objective to promote dialogue and mutual cooperation in managing migration flows
taking place along the Silk Routes and is accompanied by a follow-up package based on the pillars of the Declaration and the priorities of participating countries. 

Defining priority topics and tools, she noted that ICMPD is currently involved in 6 migration dialogues - the Budapest Process, the Prague Process, the Rabat Process, the Mediterranean Transit Migration (MTM), the Africa-EU Partnership on Migration, the Mobility and Employment (MME) and EUROMED Migration III. As an overall assessment of ICMPD activities in those areas, she noted that the migration chain must be engaged in dialogue and via proper connection on micro (individual migrants) and macro levels (countries). There is need to foster cooperation in the area of migration with and in the Silk Routes Region, through a number of specific initiatives. These can span from increased intergovernmental dialogue to joint definition of follow-up activities ensuring sustainability and building trust. She also emphasised the importance of a follow-up operational package to be developed in parallel with the preparations for the next Ministerial Conference within the Budapest Process.

Ms Lundstroem Carniel concluded her remarks by highlighting a series of more general recommendations to foster regional dialogues on migration and migration-related issues. These entail a clear definition of the purpose of cooperation, the identification and engagement of relevant stake-holders, a suitable amount of time for building relations and assessing needs and priorities, the importance to hold meetings on several levels and in different settings, a solid understanding of limitations and priority settings, and an appropriate balance of interests of all the stakeholders concerned.

Finally, Azizah Kassim, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Malaysia, analysed areas for future cooperation and obstacles that need to be overcome. At the beginning she stressed that the topic of the cooperation has to be made clear. All parties must know whether it is about workers, irregular migrants, students or asylum-seekers. Low skilled workers are still the biggest problem in Europe and Asia and both regions can work together on this issue. Due to their insecure status, low skilled workers also cause problems for the local population such as land grabbing. On the other hand, many locals are very sceptical of long-term migrants as they feel threatened. It is, thus, important to show them the benefits and contributions migrants make to the society and economy. Kassim also highlighted that the dialogue has to evolve into concrete actions. An easy start for such can be information sharing (similar to what ReCAAP does) and exchange on practices; for instance, policies and initiatives that worked. Such an exchange has to include migrants, the sending and receiving country.

The policy panel showed that there are several mechanisms in place to facilitate labour migration. However, most of these have a multilateral character which can make the concrete implementation more difficult. An addition of bilateral or segment-specific
mechanisms can help to improve the situation. In particular, irregular migration in Asia is a key challenge where the EU can provide assistance and share its experience of dealing with this topic. The discussion highlighted that there are a number of topics that should be considered for future cooperation. Migration should be seen in the broader context of addressing the push factors in sending countries and be combined with urbanization and environmental degradation.
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