

4th International Border Management Conference

23-24 November 2021, Kiyv UA and Online

Thematic Roundtable I: The role of Border Management as an Enabler of Development and a Safeguard of Security

12:30-12:45 ICMPD: Martijn Pluim, Director MDC: "Border management and development"

Your excellencies, esteemed commanders, dear directors, ladies and gentlemen, friends and colleagues, online and present here with us.

It is an honour for me to be here at the occasion of the 4th International Border Management Conference. I am particularly happy to have this conference in Kiev, the capital of a country ICMPD has close and warm relations with, since several decades. Indeed, where better to talk about border governance than in Ukraine, with its thousands of kilometres of borders, its numerous neighbours and central location along routes, that are key for trade, mobility and migration.

Many of us are - in one way or another – working on a daily basis to solve the challenges and seize the opportunities posed by increased global mobility. By global mobility I mean mobility of people, but also mobility of goods, services, ideas and technology across borders.

The challenges we must solve are related to security, health and stability and thus how to ensure this mobility doesn't damage people, spread diseases, hurt our businesses, or erode our ways of life?

The opportunities we must seize are directly linked to development of people, communities, countries and indeed whole regions. They can be of financial and tangible nature, via trade and tourism, or more of intellectual and 'well-being' nature, via the exchange of ideas, the connecting of communities and families or offering protection for refugees.

I will argue today that well-functioning and efficient border agencies are the foundation upon which national and regional mobility and development are built, and that they are essential for the development of any country.

In the public debate, however, border management is often seen only in terms of security and restrictions. This rarely questioned assumption leads to the notion that border management – at least implicitly – is an obstacle to the free movement of people, goods and services and consequently a potential hindrance to the full development potential of such mobility, or even blocking development. This notion, however, is wrong.

So, how to define border governance?

Border governance is the mechanism that regulates the transfer of people, animals, plants and goods from one State to another. Trade, legal migration, mobility, tourism are usually considered positive for the development of any State. Thus, we can consider that border management is an enabler of development. The absence of well-functioning border governance systems does not liberalise flows of goods and people. On the opposite, it exposes these positive activities to arbitrary treatment, harassment and corruption.

However, the mere physical capacity to manage one's borders does not mean that borders are managed well. This capacity should be guided by national development objectives and embedded in an overall strategy. On that basis, connected policies can be developed, which emphasise mobility of people and goods, set functioning rules, control the implementation and ensure cooperation with all other parties involved both at national and international level.

Development strategies should be mainstreamed in border management strategies and vice versa. As a consequence, investing in capacity development for border agencies has the potential to secure or enhance development potentials because it enhances a State's capacity to apply good governance, protect the rule of law, and to manage flows of passengers, migrants and goods.

There is also no size fits all approach. Indeed many countries will apply different standards because they have different political systems, development objectives, financial and technical resources and obviously because the traffic across borders differs from one State to another.

Dear colleagues, at national level, border governance requires close partnerships between customs, border guards and many other public and private actors. It will, however, also not function without international cooperation and partnership.

In many regions, neighbouring countries do not always work together, not because they have problems with each other, but because their institutions lack the framework or capacity to cooperate. This impairs not only mobility of people but also mobility of goods and thus development. And indeed, can create serious security and health threats to states and citizens alike.

As I mentioned: it often is the lack of proper border governance which creates insecurity, hampers development and feeds corruption. It is bad or improper international cooperation and bad, redundant or lacking procedures which hinder trade. It is the absence of awareness of possible vulnerabilities of specific groups and proper training which leads to human right abuses.

For the global business is important that their investment opportunities can profit from a safe and secure environment, with short, transparent and efficient procedures for their staff and imports/exports.

It is my strong conviction that without continuously developing systems of comprehensive border governance that progress and development of governments and their people is hampered. It can lead to less trade and thus less income. It may lead to more organised crime, insecurity and corruption. Indeed, I dare to say that optimal national and international prosperity can only be achieved in an environment that guarantees the safe and orderly movement of people and goods across borders. Effective border governance plays a key role in development efforts.

As an organisation, ICMPD actively supports international partnerships. In West Africa, for example, ICMPD has recently supported the signing of cooperation agreement on border governance between Togo, Ghana, Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire. It constitutes a further step in operational cross-border cooperation in the region. It will address security concerns at the same level as development areas business alike and provide safe environment for border communities.

In the Silk Routes region, the countries from Bangladesh to Iraq are subjected to a range of threats and pressures, such as internal and regional instability, security challenges and natural disasters, growing refugee populations and increasingly dynamic mixed migration flows within and beyond the region. With EU funding, ICMPD is implementing the IBM Silk Routes project, which seeks to support the countries in the region to build more effective and efficient border governance systems, and in doing so strengthen the capacity of state authorities to combat irregular migration, encourage safe migration, and enhance trade and prosperity across borders.

Dear colleagues, as I mentioned, there is no contradiction between border control and development, freedom of movement, free flow of goods, trade etc. Indeed, when properly designed, investments in border governance are direct and efficient investments in development. But for that to happen, border governance programmes need to be designed in a way that it serves security, control, good governance and economic development. A lot can be learned and transferred from European experiences. Even more, however, needs to be adapted and designed in accordance with local and regional contexts.

In summary, border agencies, such as the ones represented by you here today are key development partners for national governments and for international donors and other players. ICMPD is working with many of you to constantly empower you to execute your essential tasks for the benefit of the wider society, and we are grateful for your trust, your support and indeed in many cases friendship. Thank You.