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NOTE

From:	Hungarian delegation
To:	Working Party on External Aspects of Asylum and Migration (EMWP)
Subject:	Background paper on the draft Budapest Process Ministerial Declaration and the draft Budapest Process Call for Action 2025-2030

Over the last 30 years, the Budapest Process has become recognised by participating states from East to West as an excellent tool for identifying and addressing evolving migration challenges. This is the only interregional dialogue on migration stretching from Europe to the Silk Routes Region – also covering Europe’s Eastern neighbours, the Western Balkans and Central Asia. The Budapest Process provides a platform for dialogue and operational cooperation for over 50 governments and 10 international organisations with the aim to strengthen cooperation on migration and mobility.

The Budapest Process is currently focusing on the development of the new Ministerial Declaration and Action Plan which is due to be signed on the 7th Ministerial Conference in Budapest.

2023 marked the 30th anniversary of the dialogue and countries gathered in Istanbul to celebrate this milestone and to discuss the next chapter of the dialogue, embarking on negotiations for the 7th Ministerial Conference planned on 11-12 November 2024 in Budapest, Hungary. Ministerial Conferences are milestones in the development of the Budapest Process. Ministerial Conferences happen on average every five years and lead to the adoption of a Ministerial Declaration by dialogue partners. This Declaration shapes the next season of the dialogue, which usually last five years. Since 2019, Ministerial Declarations are complemented by an Action Plan which set out clear action points to follow up on the implementation of key priorities for dialogue partners.

The Zero Drafts of the Ministerial Declaration and Action Plan were presented at the Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) on 5 December in Istanbul, where participating countries and organisations gave initial feedback. The Chairmanship then requested all the participating countries and organisations to provide their written feedback on the draft documents by end of December 2023. Feedback provided, has been consolidated and reviewed, and both the Ministerial Declaration and Action Plan have been further revised accordingly. On 7 May 2024, the Reference Group Meeting of the Budapest Process in Istanbul revised the draft texts again.

Overall, strong support was expressed by all the Budapest Process Member States to the draft texts as they aligned with their national priorities and reflected a balanced and holistic approach towards migration governance.

The next SOM, which serves as the second preparatory meeting at senior officials' level for the Ministerial Conference, will be held on 27 June 2024 in Stockholm, Sweden. The remaining time until the SOM will serve an opportunity for Budapest Process Member States to provide written feedback on the revised drafts, while the SOM in Stockholm will be again an opportunity for the delegates to present any further comments on the draft Ministerial Declaration and draft Action Plan.

The purpose of the discussion at EMWP on 17 May is to provide an opportunity for Member States to comment on the following draft documents to be adopted in November 2024:

1. The draft text of the Ministerial Declaration (Annex 1);
2. The draft text of the Action Plan (Annex 2)

As described above, the drafts will be further discussed and shaped at the upcoming Budapest process meetings, while adoption is foreseen at the Ministerial meeting in November.

The Budapest Process Ministerial Declaration

WE, the Ministers responsible for migration and migration-related matters from the Budapest Process participating and observer States: EU Member States, Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Georgia, India, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Pakistan, Serbia, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Türkiye, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, United Kingdom and Uzbekistan¹;

Gathered in Budapest on ... 2024 at the 7th Ministerial Conference of the Budapest Process, at the invitation of Hungary;

Thanking the Chair, Türkiye and Co-Chair, Hungary, for their timely initiative and support, and the Secretariat, ICMPD, for its administrative and substance preparations;

Recognising the unique role and strong impact of the Budapest Process and the Silk Routes Partnership for Migration as well as the substantial progress made regarding migration cooperation with and within the Silk Routes Region²;

Affirming the need for a renewed political commitment in light of major migration flows in the last years affecting different regions of the Budapest Process, translating global commitments and frameworks into regional realities;

Taking into account the main developments since our 6th Ministerial Conference in 2019 in Istanbul which have a tangible and direct influence on migratory movements along the routes in and within the Budapest Process States;

Acknowledging that migration and international protection issues should be handled in accordance with relevant international laws and UN guiding principles, while taking full account of national laws and competences;

Recognising existing frameworks and instruments which affect the governance of migration at national, regional and international levels, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted in September 2015;

Taking into account the adoption in December 2018 of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees³ by several Budapest Process States, reflecting the commitment of the respective States to migration governance and international protection systems;

¹ Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, China, India, Iran and the United States of America are observers to the Budapest Process and participate in relevant events and activities.

² The Silk Routes Region comprises of: Afghanistan (until 08/21), Bangladesh, Iran, Iraq and Pakistan.

³ Without prejudice to the position of each participating or observer state of the Budapest Process towards the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees.

Recalling the adoption of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum⁴, and its relevance to the external dimension of migration and migration cooperation platforms, such as the Budapest Process dialogue;

Considering the efforts taken to strengthen international cooperation against migrant smuggling, in particular the Global Alliance to Counter Migrant Smuggling launched by the European Commission in November 2023;

Conscious that the States of the Budapest Process are historically affected by largescale movements of refugees and migrants⁵ and have historic experience and a constructive role in finding solutions to managing large movements of people;

Recognising the importance of cooperation frameworks for migration and mobility among the Budapest Process States and the bilateral cooperation which ensues;

Concerned about the migration-related consequences of protracted crises, conflicts and wars, including as related to irregular migratory movements, notably the situations in Afghanistan, Ukraine and in the Middle East;

Determined to find appropriate and coordinated approaches to make migration orderly, safe, regular and responsible in the Silk Routes Region, in countries of origin, transit and destination, while taking full account of national competences and specificities;

Convinced that only a comprehensive, over-arching, human rights-based and inclusive approach can ensure the success of our collective actions in the face of the complexity of the phenomenon of international migration and forced displacement;

Taking into account the multiple root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement, notably as related to environmental degradation and climate change and the importance to mitigate their impact in the most affected regions, specifically the Silk Routes Region;

Taking into account labour shortages in specific sectors and the possibility to match these needs to a talent pool of available candidates in partner States, specifically in the Silk Routes Region, whilst acknowledging the need to prevent brain drain and taking into account national competences;

Taking into account the importance of cooperation on safe returns, readmission and sustainable reintegration as well as the obligation of states to readmit their own citizens with a view to ensure safe and orderly migration;

⁴ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:85ff8b4f-ff13-11ea-b44f-01aa75ed71a1.0002.02/DOC_3&format=PDF

⁵ Refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons and others with protection needs, as well as migrant workers, their families, and other migrants, are all governed by different international legal and political frameworks and this Declaration reaffirms the distinctions in their status under international law.

Emphasising the need for continued support to strengthen the capacities of countries of origin, transit and destination, while ensuring the alignment of our interventions with national development strategies, including increased attention to women, youth and diasporas as levers of change;

Reiterating our individual and collective commitment to the Budapest Process, its principles and objectives;

Recalling the commitments made at all earlier Ministerial Conferences and the relevance of the 2013 Istanbul Declaration and the 2019 Istanbul Commitments;

Recognising the progress made in the implementation of the Call for Action and the need to strengthen the Call for Action to better achieve our objectives;

Adopt the attached Action Plan “The Call for Action 2025-2030” and its five following priorities, all of equal importance while taking full account of national competences:

- **Priority 1:** Prevent and fight against irregular migration, migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings and reinforce the cooperation in the field of border management;
- **Priority 2:** Strengthen existing policies and pathways for legal migration and mobility;
- **Priority 3:** Strengthen cooperation for safe and effective return and for sustainable reintegration;
- **Priority 4:** Strengthen the positive impact of migration on development, as well as address the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement;
- **Priority 5:** Ensure international protection and the respect of the rights of refugees and persons in need of international protection, in line with international obligations.

Agree equally to adopt the following approaches and cross-cutting priorities to be mainstreamed throughout the implementation of the Call for Action:

- **A regional and whole of route approach:** the identification, formulation and execution of actions will take into account local and regional specificities. In addition, the Budapest Process partner states will take into account migration patterns along the whole routes, from countries of origin, transit and destination;
- **An inclusive and multi-stakeholder approach:** the partners will have a whole of government and whole-of-society approach and seek to involve all relevant actors (such as regional organisations, local authorities, traditional and customary authorities, representatives of civil society and migrant and refugee communities, social partners, the private sector, the media and academia) as well as relevant International Organisations, to ensure coordinated and orderly management of all dimensions of the migration;
- **A human rights-based approach:** the implemented actions will contribute to fully respecting the human rights and dignity of refugees, persons in need of international protection, migrants and victims of trafficking in human beings, irrespective of their migration status;
- **Racism, discrimination and xenophobia:** Particular attention will be paid to the fight against racism, discrimination and xenophobia, better access to basic rights (education, training, social protection, healthcare, justice) and a balanced narrative on migration;

- **Gender and vulnerability:** Particular attention will be paid to groups at heightened risk, gender-specific needs, other vulnerable groups and victims of trafficking in human beings;
- **Data reliability and exchange:** Particular attention will be paid to exchange of information, reliable data and analysis on migration to contribute to migration policy-making processes, notably through IT support.

Decide to strengthen the institutional governance of the Budapest Process by endorsing the role of the Reference Group, as set out in its Terms of Reference, for the implementation of the Call for Action;

Decide to endorse the set-up of the three Thematic Working Groups, respectively on law enforcement cooperation to counter irregular migration, return and reintegration and legal pathways for migration, supported by the Budapest Process Secretariat, hosted by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD);

Agree to support the implementation of the Call for Action through the use of appropriate instruments and initiatives and national resources of Budapest Process States;

Commit ourselves, with the support of the Budapest Process Secretariat, to establishing mechanisms and developing relevant tools to periodically monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Call for Action in order to improve its scope and impact;

Congratulate the authorities of Hungary for the facilities made available to our 7th Ministerial Conference to ensure its full success.

The Budapest Process Call for Action 2025-2030

Priority Goal 1

Prevent and fight against irregular migration, migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings and reinforce the cooperation in the field of border management

1. Strengthen international, regional and bilateral cooperation and improve coordination in order to prevent and fight against irregular migration, migrant smuggling, in support of the Global Alliance to Counter Migrant Smuggling - as well as trafficking in human beings, including by employing a whole-of-government, whole-of-route and whole-of-society approach;
2. Strengthen the capacities of national authorities to prevent and fight against smuggling of migrants and trafficking in human beings to allow for effective operational cooperation, including international information exchange and joint investigations, contributing to identification, dismantling, prosecution and punishment of smuggling and trafficking networks;
3. Support Budapest Process countries to build more effective, sustainable and rights-based border management systems, notably through international cooperation and the increased use of modern technologies;
4. Strengthen the use of awareness raising and information campaigns, involving all relevant stakeholders, to reduce the risks of irregular migration, smuggling of migrants and trafficking in human beings;
5. Continue to develop and review national and regional strategies and policies for the protection, assistance, referral and reintegration of victims of trafficking, in particular women and children as well as other vulnerable groups, involving all relevant stakeholders. Strategies and policies should also include actions to prevent the demand that fosters trafficking in human beings.

Priority Goal 2

Strengthen existing policies and pathways for legal migration and mobility

1. Promote skills development as well as skills matching, skills mapping, the recognition of diplomas and work experience as well as portability of social rights of regular migrants and their families, i.a. through partnerships with the education sector, training and vocational schools as well as the employers from the private sector;
2. Strengthen existing policies and pathways for regular migration, including through efficient and speedy visa procedures, taking into account national labour market needs and migratory and security risks and national competences as well as improve transparency of rules and regulations on admission and residence;

3. Reinforce labour mobility schemes, including through labour mobility agreements as well as their implementation, such as with programmes for circular and temporary migration;
4. Promote decent work and improve labour inspections to avoid labour exploitation, abusive practices and violations of human and labour rights of migrant workers during the recruitment process as well as in their work;
5. Increase initiatives and promote better use of existing means for enhanced student, researchers and academic mobility between the Budapest Process partners, specifically within the Silk Routes Region, including the setting up of scholarship and trainee programmes;
6. Promote communication, awareness raising and easy access to relevant, accurate and timely information on regular channels of migration for intending migrants and provision of vocational and language training, notably through the work of the Migrant Resource Centres;

Priority Goal 3

Strengthen cooperation for safe and effective return and for sustainable reintegration

1. Enhance international, regional and bilateral cooperation on return and readmission and strengthen capacities of the competent authorities notably by improving and ensuring the process of identification and issuance of travel documents;
2. Support countries of origin and destination to ensure effective management and monitoring of return and reintegration processes, as well as enhance a coordinated outreach to countries of origin;
3. Promote the use of innovative techniques, electronic systems and digitalisation in order to improve cooperation on data and information exchange related to return and readmission, in compliance with data protection standards;
4. Support the strengthening of first line support and referral mechanisms provided to returning migrants, through information campaigns, database formation and the inclusion of returnees in local development programmes;
5. Reinforce the ownership and capacities of countries of return throughout the return and reintegration process, notably by supporting the establishment of their national reintegration structures, including through the support of the Migrant Resource Centres;
6. Strengthen return and sustainable reintegration process, in a multistakeholder approach and with the private sector, ensuring that returning migrants are accompanied and included in development policies and economic, social and psychosocial reintegration programmes and reconstruction at the local level.

Priority Goal 4

Strengthen the positive impact of migration on development as well as address the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement

1. Promote the inclusion of migration into development strategies and cooperation programmes, while promoting the application of existing regional normative frameworks;
2. Support the creation of livelihood opportunities in countries of origin, transit and destination in order to promote self-reliance and reduce dependency;
3. Analyse and address root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement in targeted local contexts, through the use of good practices such as migration data collection and analysis
4. Improve cooperation with the private sector and promote sustainable development efforts in countries of origin, transit and destination, by supporting policies aiming at creating job opportunities and stepping up support to micro, small and medium size enterprises (SMEs), with special focus on women, youth, persons with disabilities and rural populations, as well as other groups at heightened risk;
5. Facilitate and promote the faster, cheaper and safer transfer and better use of remittances by migrants to their countries of origin, including by providing trainings on financial literacy and by supporting initiatives using the potential of new technologies;
6. Engage with diasporas, including by bringing together representatives of diaspora communities and governments of countries of origin and destination on recognising the role and needs of diaspora communities in development and investment in countries of origin as well as in integration in the host societies.

Priority Goal 5

Ensure international protection and the respect of the rights of refugees and persons in need of international protection, in line with international obligations

1. Support and build the capacities of national institutions in charge of asylum systems, in collaboration with competent stakeholders, to ensure compliance with international obligations;
2. Promote measures to enhance registration and protection of refugees and persons in need of international protection, providing them with adequate reception conditions and documentation. Particular attention will be paid to groups at heightened risk and other vulnerable groups, gender specific needs, the best interests of the child and the needs and rights of unaccompanied children;

3. Promote the adoption of local, national and regional policies and measures and share experiences, good practices and lessons learned in addressing situations of mass influx of people in need of international protection and mixed migration flows;
4. Maintain and further improve procedures for the identification of asylum seekers and people in need of international protection and promote durable solutions namely voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement as well as complementary pathways to protection;
5. Enhance solidarity and responsibility sharing with countries hosting large numbers of refugees by increasing cooperation, notably on resettlement and providing technical and financial assistance to host countries, as relevant.

