

CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT

Participants

The 13th ASEM Conference of Directors General of Immigration and Management of Migratory Flows was hosted by the Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA), Ministry of Home Affairs at the Grand Copthorne Waterfront Hotel, Singapore, from 5 to 6 October 2015.

2 It was attended by 38 delegates from ASEM Asian countries, 16 delegates from ASEM European countries and two delegates from the European Union (EU). One delegate from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) attended the Conference as an observer.

3 The list of participants is at Annex A.

Inauguration

4 The Conference was inaugurated by Senior Minister of State for Home Affairs and National Development, Mr Desmond Lee, who welcomed the delegates from the ASEM Member Countries and representative from the European Union. He lauded the growth of ASEM as a major international grouping and emphasized the importance of ASEM as a learning platform. The ASEM Conference of Directors General of Immigration and Management of Migratory Flow was one such forum that brought together immigration counterparts from both regions to a common platform for exchange of views and best practices on connectivity, facilitation and tourism. Mr Lee added that with globalization and greater inter-connectivity, terrorist organisations and particularly the present phenomenon of Foreign Terrorist Fighters posed a real security threat. Self-radicalisation, supported by easy internet access to information, would be a growing concern for many countries. He noted that ASEM had allowed member countries opportunities to share their approach and practices in border management to strike a balance between security and travel facilitation. Finally, Mr Lee emphasised that ASEM should continue to build on its value proposition of being a key platform for forging stronger Asia-Europe links, by:

- (i) Strengthening Europe-Asia connectivity across more fields;
- (ii) Matching European expertise with Asia's needs, such as urban solutions and infrastructure financing;

- (iii) Addressing security threats, including intra-state and cross-border violence, cybercrime, illegal migration and irregular movement of persons, including people-smuggling and trafficking in persons; and
- (iv) Building capacities through joint exchanges, in areas such as detecting forged documents, identifying undesirable individuals and understanding travel patterns and history of criminals and terrorists.

5 The Chairman for the Conference, Commissioner Immigration & Checkpoints Authority, Singapore, Mr Clarence Yeo welcomed the delegates. He noted that the rapid increase in international migrants and the changes in the geopolitical situation and spoke on the need for immigration authorities to manage the flow whilst ensuring security for the country given their rapid increase in the numbers. Against this backdrop, Mr Yeo introduced the theme for the Conference: “**Migration Management Strategies**”. He shared that during the Conference, Member Countries would contribute and share their experiences and best practices on how secure travel could be facilitated using biometric technologies, as well as how a balance between travel facilitation and national interest could be achieved.

6 Mr Yeo highlighted the increasingly complex and demanding operating reality and shared that ICA cleared almost 200 million travellers at the Singapore checkpoints and that this was about 51% more than the travellers cleared in 2004. He said that while immigration authorities across the world were constantly challenged, we must not lose sight of the economic benefits tourism and business bring to a country. Hence, it was important to ensure that security measures did not choke the free flow of goods, people and conveyances. To this end, he emphasized the need to balance service and security through the exploration of innovative technologies so that Member Countries could have an operational model which could withstand the tide of change and be future-ready. In this regard, he said the sub-themes chosen for the Conference would allow Member Countries to discuss how immigration authorities could mitigate the challenges brought about by globalisation. Mr Yeo also shared that Singapore had introduced the Integrated Checkpoints Command (ICC) to provide a more effective and coordinated response to checkpoint security. He said that the site visit to Woodlands Checkpoint would offer Member Countries a glimpse into one of the world’s busiest land checkpoints and the biometric solutions used for identity management and secure immigration clearance.

Structure of Conference

7 The Conference followed the general discussions of the 12th ASEM Conference held in Japan on migration policy as a strategy for economic growth, where the priorities relating to (i) strengthening cooperation in migration management between countries to ensure sustainable economic growth, (ii) safeguarding the well-being of foreigners in host countries through policy and legislation and (iii) increasing inter-ministerial cooperation mechanisms and dialogues were set out.

8 The structure of the 13th ASEM Conference of Directors-General of Immigration and Management of Migratory Flows comprised three plenary sessions focusing on themes relating to facilitating secured travel through biometrics and the increasing importance of striking a balance between travel facilitation and national interests. The Conference also welcomed the participation of the IOM in providing Member Countries an update on the latest emerging migration trends as well as the representative of European Union on worker mobility in tackling skills challenge.

9 Besides the three plenary sessions, the Conference provided opportunities for discussions and interactions between Member Countries through two breakout sessions focusing on the sub-themes, allowing more in-depth sharing and exchange of views on the topic of biometrics developments and balancing travel facilitation with national interests, especially in the context of the current security climate.

Plenary Sessions

Session I

10 The first plenary session addressed the topic of “**Facilitating Secured Travel through Biometrics**”. During this session, presentations were made by the representatives from Australia and South Korea.

11 **Ms Agnes Kumar, Director, Strategic Policy and Planning Division, Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP), Australia provided an overview on the Australian DIBP’s border security strategies for identity management and its use of biometrics.** She underscored the importance of accurately establishing identity as the prerequisite for all security, character and integrity checks at the borders. There would be repercussions without a proper system of doing so, including security risks, wrongful detention or removal from the country, or allowing people to obtain visas that they were not entitled to. Ms Agnes Kumar explained that Australia’s approach involved using an intelligence-led and risk-based identity management. It focused on innovation to ensure seamless trade and travel experiences, collaborative partnerships and consistent training and support for staff who make identity decisions. A robust legislative framework had been put in place to strengthen Australia’s identity management. In 2004, Australia introduced a biometrics framework in the Migration Act. More recently in 2014, the Act was amended to require all travellers to provide personal identifiers. The most recent amendments to the Migration Act created a single broad power to require personal identifiers of persons seeking to enter and depart, and of non-citizens who remain in Australia was passed in August 2015 by the Australian Parliament.

12 Identity management in Australia comprised the use of biographic data, credentials (i.e. documents) and biometric anchor. Ms Agnes Kumar explained that the Department used a multi-modal biometric system which included the mobile biometric capture unit and mobile

handheld device to conduct fingerprint screening. SmartGate technology was used to read ePassports and facial recognition technology was employed to automate border checks by a Primary Line Officer. This had helped Australia achieve smoother and more efficient passenger processing, whilst attaining a high level of identity assurance. At the same time, Australia could redeploy officers to other critical areas. Australia envisaged that the future of identity management would be the development of a single system that could support end-to-end identity management, which would present the one ‘true view’ of a client.

13 Touching on border management, Ms Agnes Kumar presented four possible scenarios that the Department faced at the borders. She noted that to implement biometrics, there was a need to build trust in the community through communicating the benefits. Generally, she noted that young people were favourable to biometric security and the Australian population typically balanced their decisions to provide personal information based on risks and benefits. She said to secure public confidence, there must be transparency and accountability in how personal information were used and stored.

14 **Mr Kim Woo-ho, Director of General of Nationality and Integration Policy, Korea Immigration Service, Republic of Korea made a presentation on “Effective Immigration Clearance System through Bio-data”.** Mr Kim shared with the participants the operating concept of its Smart Entry Service (SES). Mr Kim also explained the continuous innovation of the SES gates, which had evolved to be a multi-modal biometrics system which included fingerprint and facial technologies. This resulted in shorter waiting time, quicker immigration processes and strengthened border security. Mr Kim elaborated that Korea had established international mutual auto-clearance cooperation with the United States in 2012 and Hong Kong SAR in 2013.

15 Mr Kim also presented on its Foreign Biometric Identification System, which was used to collect fingerprints and facial images of foreigners entering Korea and when applying for alien registration at the immigration office. Lessons learnt from the system implementation were also presented. For example, a step-by-step audio instruction guide in multiple languages to help travellers using fingerprint scanners was implemented to further aid travellers. He also introduced the functions of the Korea Immigration Document Examination Section, which was a specialized division for documents and biometrics examination. The section also provided training to all immigration staff. Such technologies and staff expertise had helped build a solid foundation for Korea Immigration Service to get high international recognition.

Discussion

16 The discussion focused on the challenges faced by countries with the increased trans-boundary movement of people against the backdrop of global heightened security climate and how the biometric technologies could be an enabler. Challenges faced by member countries included privacy concerns and data protection issues, use of different technologies,

geographical challenges, different legal frameworks and lack of specific international standards on the use of biometric identifiers.

17 In general, participants agreed that biometrics technology was a key enabler for immigration and other law enforcement agencies to establish identity of persons while the move towards the use of biometrics depended on the risk for each country. If used effectively, it would help weed out persons of interest while facilitating the cross-border movement of genuine travellers. In the longer term, multi-modal biometrics would be a useful solution to overcome challenges that single-biometrics models currently faced. However, it was acknowledged that biometrics technology was not a panacea. It was important to take into consideration policies, processes, legislations and systems. Participants agreed that member countries should continue to collaborate and cooperate through platforms such as ASEM.

Visit to Woodlands Checkpoint

18 ICA hosted participants to a visit to Woodlands Checkpoint. Woodlands Checkpoint is one of the world's busiest land checkpoints. During the visit, ICA showcased its technological solutions and biometrics systems used for identity management and secure immigration clearance.

Session II

19 The second plenary session addressed the topic of “**Migration Trends and Balance between Travel Facilitation and National Interest**”. Presentations were made by the representatives from IOM, Germany, China and Singapore.

20 **Mr Andrew Bruce, Regional Director of IOM, presented on the Migration Trends in the Next Decade.** Mr Bruce addressed two migration myths that had negative impact on migration management, namely de-humanization and that migrants were from poor countries. Such misinformation contributed to anti-immigration sentiment. Mr Bruce noted that less than half of all international migrants move from South to North, and almost as many move between countries of the South. Despite this phenomenon, the life experiences of South-South migrants were largely unstudied. South-South migration was mainly for personal and economic reasons. This group was the most vulnerable and required most attention. However, Mr Bruce pointed out that policy debate focused overwhelmingly on the situation of migrants in the North.

21 Mr Bruce shared with the Conference the numbers of forced migration between 2009 and 2013. He also highlighted other concerns including migrant deaths, smuggling, trafficking and exploitation. In 2014, IOM had assisted 3,225 (51%) men and 3,067 (40%) women who were trafficked; children accounted for 17% of the total.

22 Mr Bruce highlighted two scenarios for the future - (i) continued recession where labour migrants would not be able to access the market, resulting in more restrictive and anti-migrant policies; and (ii) global recession had ended, resulting in economic boom and increase in labour demand at all levels. He noted that in recent years, migration and its links to development had become an increasingly important policy issue. Mr Bruce also shared the contribution of IOM in various UN platforms for the post-2015 development framework to ensure that migration remained at the foreground of the development debates. Mr Bruce presented on the current migration governance which involved high level United Nations dialogues, IOM fora, regional consultations and the various bilateral and regional agreements. He viewed that migration governance would continually evolve, with an increasing tapestry of institutions and forms of cooperation across multi-lateral, regional and bilateral levels. Lastly, Mr Bruce viewed that there was a need to increase collaboration between government, civil society organisations and the private sector; basing policy making on evidence; and greater cooperation between States, bilaterally, regionally and globally.

23 **Dr Goetz Schmidt-Bremme, Commissioner for Migration, Federal Foreign Office, Germany presented on “Humanitarian Responsibility and National Interest – Germany’s Approach”.** Dr Goetz Schmidt-Bremme shared with the participants that Germany had a high demand for skilled labour workers. He also noted that more than 90% of foreign skilled workers performed well while success rate for lower skilled workers was about 65%. The challenge for such workers was their linguistic proficiency. Dr Goetz Schmidt-Bremme also provided an update on the humanitarian migration situation in Europe. Dr Goetz Schmidt-Bremme noted that with the increased security concerns, more advanced methods of identification would be required. He said that Germany received 2.3 million visa applications in 2014 and stressed that biometric data like fingerprint was important for visa and asylum application processing. Dr Goetz Schmidt-Bremme shared with the participants that Germany had used the “Visocore” system as a technological solution to prevent fraud using forged documents. Besides this, Germany also utilised a mobile registration kit for capturing personal data in the mobile application. Dr Goetz Schmidt-Bremme also commented that Germany’s national security interests would require the implementation of relevant visa policies while balancing Germany’s need for long-term skilled migrants.

24 **Ms Wang Yan, Bureau of Exit and Entry Administration, Ministry of Public Security, China presented on Balance between Travel Facilitation and National Interest.** In the presentation, it was noted that travel facilitation benefited multiple parties through the boosting of national economy, promotion of social development and progress, as well as enhancement of understanding and friendship between people of different countries. It was also noted that immigration management also effectively prevented and cracked down illegal and criminal activities in the immigration field as well as maintained national security and stability.

25 There were 490 million entries into and exits out of China in 2014. In the same year, the number of long-term foreign residents reached 664,000. To facilitate the travel of foreigners and Chinese nationals, continuous efforts had been made to policies and measures

by introducing 72-hour visa free transit for foreigners in 16 cities, thereby further enhancing immigration inspection service.

26 Ms Wang shared some of China's initiatives to facilitate the entry, exit and stay of foreigners. China had also introduced the Chinese "Green Card". Efforts had been made in recent years to ensure that "green card" holders would enjoy the same rights and bear the same obligations as Chinese citizens, except for the political rights as well as specific rights and obligations according to relevant laws in China. Moving forward, China suggested for member countries to:

- i. Implement more facilitated visa policies including visa-free arrangements, and provide more immigration inspection facilitation;
- ii. Further reduce the visa barriers, and increase the visa issue transparency; and
- iii. Strengthen the law-enforcement cooperation and coordination in immigration field, so as to promote and facilitate the legitimate flow of personnel.

27 **Mr Gopinath Tamotharan, Head (Operations Planning), Immigration and Checkpoints Authority, Singapore presented on "Balance between Travel Facilitation and National Interest – Singapore's Strategy"**. Mr Gopinath shared with the participants on ICA's mission, vision, values and mental models. ICA was a unified organisation with diverse history. It was also one of the most visible public organisation in Singapore operating in a challenging environment. ICA's border security would focus on three key areas: Identity, Document and Intent. ICA adopted a security-focused, service-conscious approach towards border security.

28 Mr Gopinath then shared with participants ICA's TIPS strategy, comprising Technology, Information, Process and Skills. In terms of technology, Mr Gopinath shared that ICA leveraged technology for people clearance, goods clearance and datamining. He shared with participants ICA's biometric journey for people clearance and how ICA used information to support ICA's frontline operations. He explained how process review embarked by ICA had led to tangible improvements, such as the establishment of ICA's Integrated Checkpoints Command. In terms of skills, ICA had a holistic training and learning platform. Mr Gopinath shared some examples on ICA's experiential learning and game-based learning. The TIPS strategy had helped ICA balance travel facilitation and national interest, as well as to achieve positive outcomes in terms of Accolades, Business Results and Compliments.

Discussion

29 The participants agreed that the current operating environment remained volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA). Security facilitation and service had continued relevance to member countries. Against this context, participants agreed that there was an important need to strike a balance between national interests and travel facilitation. This

could be achieved through the optimal use of technology, the review of processes, policies and legislation, mobility partnerships as well as public engagement. Participants also agreed that there was no one-size-fits-all solution as any solution had to be contextualised to each country's unique operating environment. Participants also agreed that international, regional and bilateral cooperation and platforms such as the ASEM Conference of Directors General of Immigration and Management of Migratory Flows were useful for Member Countries to learn from the experiences of others.

Session III

30 The third plenary session addressed the topic of “Worker Mobility in Tackling Skills Challenge”. **The representative from European Union, H.E. Dr Michael Pulch, EU Ambassador to Singapore made a presentation on “Worker mobility, the key to tackling Europe’s demographic and skill challenges”.** EU believed in the benefits of migration for the countries of origin, countries of destination and the migrants themselves. Even with the unprecedented challenges that Europe faced today, EU acknowledged that Europe needed to address those challenges and reap its benefits. EU’s focus was on (i) genuine refugees, (ii) deterring criminal networks and (iii) identifying the root causes of migration. There has been a rise in the share of highly-qualified migrants choosing to go to EU in recent years but the gap with other destination regions remain significant. Well-managed migration can help EU Member States mitigate the effect of an ageing workforce.

31 The EU had adopted a number of policies to make it easier for some categories of labour migrants to be admitted and harmonise the conditions of admission across the EU. The EU has numerous policies to facilitate and attract highly skilled workers, for example, intra-corporate transfers and would review the main instrument: the EU Blue Card Directive. For low skilled workers, EU also had policies to facilitate this group such as leveraging seasonal workers. EU noted that the potential benefits of increasing employment rates amongst migrants were large, particularly for tertiary graduates. Notwithstanding, EU also noted that highly-qualified migrants did not move only because of immigration laws. Besides setting the correct admission rules, the EU also needed to look at flexible labour migration policies to address labour shortages. As such, the EU was taking a holistic approach on these issues.

32 Participants agreed that the worldwide trend of increasing competition for skilled workers and that education for the migrant’s children was an important aspect. This would help in social mobility of the migrants. This was particularly important in view of the volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous operating environment. To overcome this, member countries needed to invest in human capital transformation, learning, education and skills development.

Conclusion

33 The 13th ASEM Conference had enabled countries in Asia and Europe to share best practices and exchange views on challenges in migrant management.

Key Takeaways

34 First, it was recognised that the ever-increasing cross-border movement of travellers and migrants inevitably resulted in the need for immigration and border authorities to find the most efficient and effective response to facilitating secure travel by leveraging technology that combined multi-modal biometrics such as fingerprints, facial recognition systems and iris scanning technology.

35 Second, member countries operate in a geopolitical environment which was uncertain, dynamic and complex. Threats which were multi-faceted permeated national borders which required international cooperation at various levels. Through the sharing of experiences and best practices in border security management and major international events management, the delegates were able to appreciate the intricacies involved in striking the balance between travel facilitation and national as well as security interests.

ASEM “Round Table” for Migration Meeting

36 Russian Federation proposed to include a “Round Table” for Migration in the ASEM calendar of activities for 2016 and will be hosting it in Moscow in April 2016. A copy of the concept paper is at Annex B for reference.

Next European Host

37 The Conference noted that the 14th ASEM Conference of the Directors General of Immigration on Management of Migratory Flows would be hosted by an EU Member State. Member Countries would be further advised by EU on the details of the European Member Country hosting the Conference in 2016.

Next Asian Host

38 Cambodia had expressed interest in hosting the ASEM Conference of the Directors General of Immigration on Management of Migratory Flows in 2017 in Siem Reap.