

**SPEECH BY AMBASSADOR ROLF EKÉUS, ICMP COMMISSIONER**

**CONFERENCE**  
**THE MISSING: AN AGENDA FOR THE FUTURE**

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Your Majesty, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

I am honored to welcome you back to today to the Peace Palace for day two of this conference.

I have been an ICMP Commissioner for the past eight years and joined while I was still OSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities.

My predecessor in that job was Max van der Stoep who was also an ICMP Commissioner and my successor as High Commissioner for National Minorities was Knut Vollabaek has just joined ICMP.

I mention this for a specific reason. My time at the OSCE as High Commissioner allowed me to develop my own ideas but also extend the initiatives that my predecessor had developed. I learned the lessons that Max had learned and I know that Knut was also able to take on board a few of the things that I had learned.

In every international community initiative I have been involved in there has always been at least one moment when I am asked about “lessons learned”. It has become a sort of mantra – “lessons learned, lessons learned”.

But, do we learn lessons? Do we apply what we have learned in one context to another? Do we ensure the continuity of hard won ideas from one decade to another or from one place to another?

At worst “lessons learned” means a dust covered note to file written by an intern that helped to archive the papers for a short-lived mission. At best they can provide extraordinary resource of knowledge that may be shared by all.

ICMP’s mandate was initially limited to the former Yugoslavia. But the lessons learned, the model ICMP had developed enabled other countries struggling with the aftermath of conflicts to benefit from what had been achieved.

Thanks to ICMP’s perseverance, and the far sightedness of the Secretary General of INTERPOL, Mr. Ron Noble, the lessons learned from conflict were applied effectively to the response to disasters.

In March this year, ICMP signed a cooperation agreement with the International Organization on Migration. Both organizations have recognized that the lessons learned from conflicts and from disasters can also be applied to migration and human trafficking.

The heart wrenching scenes of tragedy and in Lampedusa have moved us all. As an international maritime disaster, a direct effect of illegal human trafficking and the desperation of migrants, this horrific event is truly an example of why a concerted and coordinated approach must be developed.

In this regard I am delighted to welcome Ambassador Lacy Swing, the Director General of IOM who will give the keynote address for this session.

Nick Steinberg, of Human Rights Watch's Latin American Program will introduce the plenary session and a little later we shall be hearing from Sister Consuela Morales. Her extraordinary work to bring justice to thousands of victims of drug and other criminal violence is breathtaking. I cannot think of a better example of someone who wants to see a state's judicial systems working effectively for the benefit of citizens rather than as a brutal tool for their suppression.

We will also hear from Sara Katsanis from the Institute for Genome Sciences and Policy, Professor José Antonio Lorente of the University of Granada and Director of the DNA-PROKIDS Program and from Professor Lori Baker of Baylor University. Each have a story to tell in confronting the challenge of missing persons and the disappeared. We have spoken already for a need to improve cooperation between those organizations represented here on the issue of the missing. I believe this session will make an additional point. If we look to Lampedusa, we should look beyond, to the countries of the so called Arab Spring and further. The reasons for persons going missing in the course of migration are complex.

They involve every aspect of both the society of origin and that of destination. It involves the way we monitor and secure borders; it involves the education systems at both ends, the human rights situation at both ends. Thus, while we must look beyond Lampedusa, we must also look closer at home.

I hope that as a result of this discussion more effective measures will be taken to demonstrate our commitment to ensure the dignified resolution of cases of persons missing as a result of migration and organized crime. I would now like to provide the podium to our honored guest, Ambassador Swing, Director-General of the International Organization for Migration.