AFGHANISTAN

Statement by M. Sharif Ghalib
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Mr. Chairperson,
Director General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

I would like to begin by expressing hearty felicitations to you upon your assumption of the Chairmanship of this historic session, and to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) on this landmark occasion of 60th anniversary commemoration. Allow me to also congratulate Director General, William Lacy Swing, as we all owe him tremendous debt of gratitude for his faithful and skilled leadership.

My delegation, likewise, wishes to warmly welcome new member-nations joining the Organization at this session.

Mr. Chairperson,

My delegation welcomes the undertakings by the Director General, and the "three Ps" as part of it, unfolded during his presentation, and believes that they would help prop up IOM's over-all capability to deliver more efficiently and with greater outreach as envisioned.

Mr. Chairperson,

Afghanistan remains grateful for having enjoyed momentous partnership with the IOM, stretching through long years.

We support IOM's programs focusing on technical cooperation and capacity building for government institutions involved in migration management. In the same vein, we encourage emergency relief to vulnerable displaced families, facilitation of long term return to and reintegration within Afghanistan.

Mr. Chairperson,

News recently released by UNHCR on voluntary returns indicate that over 60,000 Afghan refugees have returned home from neighboring Iran and Pakistan and other countries under UNHCR's Voluntary Return Operation in 2011. Against this backdrop, however, a high number of returnees are living in rigorous conditions and with negligible means of livelihood. This, in part, should explain why many refugees and migrants show a lack of will and opt not to return to the country.

Mr. Chairperson,

Despite formidable challenges, aiming to encourage voluntary return, Afghanistan has made efforts to reduce the scale of vulnerability of the returnees. Nonetheless, the real goal is to achieve sustainable reintegration. And for that to happen, together with our partners, we are busy revising our reintegration policy, targeting communities in areas of high return. An endeavor reflecting a transition from humanitarian emergency assistance to long term sustainable development.

Mr. Chairperson,

In addition to feeble security situation in parts of the country, at times deteriorating -- causing internal displacement -- Afghanistan has been

faced with outbreak of numerous natural disasters over the past years. This year, half of the country is hit by drought. As such, fourteen provinces have been identified, where draught has affected an estimated three million people. Immediate impact of the drought has significantly reduced the output of rain-fed agriculture (non-irrigated). The Government of Afghanistan has begun working with international organizations and the international community, at large, to provide food for the people, those in need, in the affected areas. Although, food insecurity remains a concern in the upcoming Winter. Therefore, we view of real significance, IOM's projects and programs designed to contribute more to stabilizing migrant communities for sustainable development within Afghanistan.

Mr. Chairperson,

My delegation firmly supports the establishment of the Emergency Funding Mechanism. The mechanism, we trust, would facilitate IOM's rapid response and prompt intervention aimed at assisting governments and migrants caught in emergencies and crises. We also support the 1035 Facility, supporting developing nations and member States with transition economies.

In closing, Mr. Chairperson, I wish to re-iterate my delegation's congratulations to the Organization for the milestones achieved thus far, and best wishes for its continued success in the years and decades to come.

I thank you,