



SIERRA LEONE

106th Session of IOM Council

GENERAL STATEMENT

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

Sierra Leone would like to start by congratulating you and the Bureau for your election to lead the work of the 106th Session of the IOM Council. This session is particularly important, as it is happening at a time when the migration issues facing the world are overwhelming – in “The Year of the Migrant” as the Director General has described it, characterized by the massive population movements across the Mediterranean Sea to Europe, among others.

For yet another year, the IOM, under the able directorship of Ambassador Lacey Swing, has played an indispensable role as a prime leader on migration issues, addressing, *inter alia*, the major catastrophes facing the world, whether the Ebola crisis in West Africa or the major Mediterranean migrant crisis, in providing humanitarian assistance, as well as migration in the context of development. Indeed, the growing number of applications for membership and observership of IOM are a clear manifestation of the appreciation of the work of the organization.

Sierra Leone is particularly grateful to IOM for the support it gave to the country in addressing the Ebola crisis, and no doubt the Council will hear more about this during the panel discussion on the subject on Thursday 26 December 2015, at which the Sierra Leone Deputy Minister of Health will participate. In this our general statement, Sierra Leone would like to focus on the migration issues facing the world, in general, and Sierra Leone in particular.

Mr. Chairman,

First and foremost, Sierra Leone would like to commend the actions taken by IOM in response to the Mediterranean crisis. The four pillars of the IOM Response Plan deserve a special mention. The first pillar rightly focusses on the human rights of migrants, namely reducing the loss of life and human suffering during and as a result of migration. The second pillar concerns addressing the drivers of irregular and forced migration, in order to reduce negative contributing factors to irregular and forced migration, thus promoting a genuine choice between migrating safely and finding local initiatives.

The third pillar is to promote safe, orderly and dignified human mobility, while pillar four involves the strengthening of partnerships for inclusive growth and sustainable development that would enable the positive outcomes of migration for all involved. We call on donors to give their generous support to IOM to enable it to implement its Response Plan for the Mediterranean and Beyond.

Mr. Chairman,

The elements of this response plan have worldwide relevance. For countries such as Sierra Leone, access to visas to many countries is very difficult if not impossible to obtain. Some nationals in West Africa have to travel to other countries in West Africa to obtain visas at significant cost, even for official trips. Visas are refused, even for family visits, for no understandable reasons. Migration in search of filling up gaps in the labour markets of developed countries, through formal channels, is thus categorically discouraged. Improving this situation would reduce the temptation for people to revert to clandestine means from which unscrupulous traffickers profit and which lead to needless loss of life.

My delegation believes that organized migration could assist in addressing the unemployment problem facing the youth, and would like to work with IOM to explore possible options.

Mr. Chairman,

In September this year, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which recognizes the positive contributions of migration to sustainable development. We, as members of IOM, have the responsibility to ensure that the IOM can make a valuable contribution to its implementation, in the areas of its work and expertise.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation applauds the efforts that have been made by IOM to address the three “Cs” – continuity, coherence and change. We note with interest the various actions that have been taken by IOM to address these, as presented in the Director General’s report and encourages IOM to continue in this direction. Particular mention needs to be made, in this connection, to the commendable actions taken to reduce costs.

Mr. Chairman,

Finally, Sierra Leone would like to thank the Director General for his offer of immediate access to funds for development projects to countries that have recently settled their arrears with the organization, and wishes to state that my delegation intends to take up this offer, without delay. As we take steps to recover from the Ebola crisis, and rebuild a more resilient community, we count on any support, including advocacy, which IOM could accord us.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to once again thank IOM for all the assistance it is giving to Sierra Leone, including through its office in Freetown, which is headed by a Sierra Leonean. His dedication and active involvement in addressing problems as they occur, are most appreciated.

I thank you.