

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, and Distinguished Colleagues:

As you may know, today is the day the United States celebrates Thanksgiving. This holiday commemorates the lifesaving assistance Native Americans gave to the pilgrims from Europe when they migrated to North America.

In this spirit, we'd like to begin by giving thanks to IOM and its staff for their outstanding contributions and service to migrants over the past year, and to Director General Swing for his tireless and inspirational leadership. The massive number of crises we face call for an equally massive response, and IOM has been there every step of the way. We recognize that this is often under difficult and dangerous circumstances and sometimes, as we most unfortunately witnessed this fall, at great human cost.

I would also like to express my thanks to Ambassador Eddico of Ghana for his work as chair of the Council over the course of the last year and to extend my congratulations to Ambassador de Crombrughe and the Council Bureau on their election and to the Ghana Audit Service for their election as the new external auditor of the IOM. We welcome the newest IOM member states: St. Kitts and Nevis, Sao Tome and Principe, Kiribati, St. Lucia, and Eritrea, and the new observer organizations. We look forward to working with you all to shape the organization over the coming year as it pursues its mandate to promote safe, regular migration for the benefit of all.

The membership growth reflects migration's impact on us all – as states and as humans, and recognition that we cannot address migration challenges alone. The importance of migration has been tremendously – and too often tragically – apparent over the last year as the international community witnessed migration emergencies in the Andaman Sea and in the Mediterranean, and was once again challenged by the complexity of migrants caught in crisis in Yemen.

Director General Swing cautioned against xenophobic rhetoric in the wake of recent terrorist attacks and it is timely remember that as member states we joined this organization because we believe that safe, regular migration can and does benefit us all.

We have a shared responsibility to respond to refugee and migration emergencies crises. The events of the last year underscored the fact that the international community needs IOM. We need a multilateral partner that helps us come together and share practice, as IOM does. We need a partner that can work with states to develop their capacity to humanely manage migration as IOM does. We need this partner with operational expertise that recognizes the best way to help the vulnerable migrant populations at the core of its mandate is by taking tangible, practical action, as IOM has done in countless responses.

Migration is multi-faceted and complex, and IOM has proven time and again its value working with states to help us better respond as an international community. IOM has been instrumental in the Migrants in Countries in Crisis Initiative, led by the United States and the Philippines with other interested countries, facilitating work with other international organizations, civil society groups, and the private sector to help states and other stakeholders identify concrete, practical ways to better prepare for, respond to, and address the longer-term needs of migrants caught in upheaval when a country experiences a natural disaster or conflict. IOM has coordinated with the humanitarian community to deliver assistance to vulnerable migrants, displaced persons, and refugees, bringing its own unique capacities and expertise to the response in emergency situations around the globe. The development of a clear humanitarian policy for the organization will help the organization deliver a more consistent humanitarian response and is an important step in the organization's ongoing efforts to strengthen its humanitarian response.

We applaud IOM staff for these remarkable efforts over the last year, but we note that given the increasing strain on resources, humanitarian organizations may need to prioritize their activities in ways they have not had to do in the past. This holds true for operational activities as well as policy undertakings. Alongside this expanding humanitarian portfolio and ongoing efforts to implement the IOM budget strengthening plan, IOM continues to press onward in a broad array of new policy areas and initiatives. These are all commendable efforts which illustrate the complexity of migration, but it may be necessary to prioritize and stagger some of these initiatives to avoid further straining capacity and to allow IOM and its member states more time to collaborate. We note for example that there was

insufficient dialogue on the IOM Gender Equality Policy, and were disappointed to see references to the unique needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex migrants eliminated from the policy without an opportunity for discussion. The United States believes it is critical to recognize that a person's gender identity and sexual orientation shapes their migration experience, as does age and gender, and that IOM programs must consider this in their design.

We applaud IOM for seeking to improve its relations with the UN and the United States is supportive of that process. As we move forward, we must ensure that IOM preserves the qualities that have made it so successful, including its operational effectiveness, cost-efficiency, and flexibility. We'd like to thank Ambassador de Crombrughe for his leadership, and for working so assiduously to develop the resolution put forward for the Council's consideration. We look forward to the Director General's regular reports on his discussions with the UN, and obtaining further detail on the options IOM member states may consider and the associated costs.

Mr. Chairman,

As a nation of immigrants, the United States has been a strong supporter of IOM since it was established in 1951. We are thankful to have IOM as a strategic partner that works to advance our goals of legal, orderly, and safe migration and commend its leadership in responding to migration challenges. As member states, we must work with the IOM to continue to strengthen the organization. We look forward to working together with our colleagues in the room in the spirit of consensus to ensure that the organization has the necessary capacity and expertise to perform its important role in the international community. Thank you, and Happy Thanksgiving.