

**107th Session of the IOM Council**

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**General debate**

Statement by Mr. Karl Prummer

Chargé d'affaires a.i.

Permanent Mission of Austria to the UN in Geneva

Mr. Chairperson,

At the outset, let me express Austria's sincere appreciation for the excellent leadership of the Director General and the Deputy Director General, as well as for the dedicated work of IOM staff in the field and at Headquarters.

Austria aligns herself with the statement on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

We welcome this year's new Member States China, Salomon Islands, Tuvalu and the Kingdom of Tonga as well as the 18 new observer organisations to this Council Session.

Austria is very pleased about the new status of IOM as UN related organization and welcomes the agreement between the two organizations signed on 19 September this year – just in time before IOM's 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary on 5 December. The agreement recognizes IOM as the global lead agency on migration and ensures the independent, autonomous and non-normative nature of the organization.

Strong cooperation among all UN entities is more than ever needed with a view to the enormous challenges we face today in migration policies and management. Over the last year irregular flows of refugees and migrants to Europe have continued. One major reason for displacement remains the sad and disturbing fact that entire cities, villages and other populated areas are destroyed or significantly damaged by the use of explosive weapons. When homes, hospitals, schools and critical

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infrastructure are bombed and reduced to rubble, civilians are almost always mainly affected and have often no other option than to leave.

In Europe, Austria remains one of the most affected states as a country of transit as well as of destination. Since last year, over a million people have transited through Austria to other European countries. And more than 100.000 persons did not move on, but decided to stay in Austria and applied for asylum. This means that after Sweden, Austria has the second highest number of asylum seekers per capita among the 28 EU Member States.

At the same time we are well aware that many countries outside Europe, in particular those located in the neighbourhood of protracted conflicts and fragile states, host much larger communities of refugees, displaced persons and migrants. In particular this applies to the countries neighbouring Syria. We highly commend their enormous efforts in this regard. Stepping up support to these countries as well as enhancing reception and protection capacities of other key countries are paramount. So far, Austria has in total contributed 63 million Euros in humanitarian aid to support internally displaced persons in Syria and Iraq as well as Syrian refugees in the region [tbc MR, 6 Dec.: just yesterday, my government has decided to contribute another 5.7 million Euros in this regard].

Mr. Director-General, Austria is grateful for its excellent bilateral cooperation with your organisation. IOM has continued to be an indispensable partner in the implementation of our national program for the humanitarian admission and resettlement of Syrian refugees. Together with IOM and UNHCR Austria has concluded the phase of the program resettling 1.500 Syrian refugees; efforts to resettle another 400 Syrian refugees have already been taken up.

It is obvious that the international community must enhance its capacities to cope with the current challenges in international migration management. In this context, IOM's expertise, policy advice and operational networks as the global international organisation for migration are crucial; IOM played for instance a key role in the framework of last year's Valletta summit. It is important to keep in mind that in order

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to sustain the existing avenues for asylum and regular migration to Europe, we must intensify work to enable swift and effective return of migrants who have no right to stay in EU Member States.

Finally, let me come back to IOM's new status as related organization of the UN. On the New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants, we would like to see a key role for IOM in the work on the migration compact to be adopted in 2018. In a joint endeavour we must make the migration compact a success. For the sake of millions of affected people and in order to avoid further drowning in the seas or on other irregular migration routes, we have to seize this important opportunity.

Thank you very much.