



REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

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by

H.E. Mr. Vladislav Mladenovic

Permanent Representative of the Republic of Serbia

to the United Nations Office and other International Organisations in Geneva

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Mr. Chairperson,

I thank Ambassador William Swing for his comprehensive Report. I would also like to congratulate the 65 Anniversary of IOM and commend the Director General and the IOM staff for their excellent work and dedication.

The Republic of Serbia welcomes the adoption of the New York Declaration at the High-Level Meeting held in September in New York and the signing of the Agreement between the United Nations and the International Organization for Migration, in the belief that only through coordinated action and joint efforts by international organizations and all UN Member States, can a crucial step forward be made in addressing migration flows.

In the next two years we have an opportunity to develop the Global Compact on Migration, which needs to be an open and inclusive process where IOM, as the lead agency for migration, has a significant role to play.

There can be no doubt that in tackling migration flows it is necessary to keep in mind the root causes that have led to mass migration of population - the conflicts in Asia and Africa, on the one hand, and political and economic instability in many developing countries, on the other hand. Putting an end to on-going conflicts and implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are essential to finding a solution to the problem of displacement in the world.

Mr. Chairperson,

More than 900,000 refugees and migrants passed through Serbia on their way to Western Europe since 2015. Following the agreement reached between the

European Union and Turkey in March 2016, the number of transiting persons has been significantly reduced. However, the Western Balkans route still functions.

There are currently 7000 migrants in Serbia of whom 5300 are in asylum or collective accommodation centers. Most of them do not intend to remain in Serbia but to continue their journey to Western European countries. The introduction of new entry regimes by some European countries has resulted in longer stay of refugees and migrants in Serbia, on average, 3 months, with an increasing tendency. If the current trend continues, there is a danger of Serbia becoming a bottleneck for refugees and migrants trying to move from one EU member state to another.

The Republic of Serbia attaches particular attention to fulfilling all international standards concerning the respect of human rights of refugees and migrants, humanitarian principles and refugee law. Each and every individual has the right to apply for asylum. Enormous efforts are being made to ensure adequate assistance, appropriate accommodation and health care. At the same time, measures are being undertaken to increase border control and prevent criminal activities of persons involved in human trafficking and irregular entries, which are on the rise.

Serbia is significantly affected by the increasing number of migrants that are staying longer in Serbia with little prospect of continuing their journey in the near future. At the same time a large numbers of refugees from Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as internally displaced persons from Kosovo and Metohija in protracted displacement in Serbia are in need of socio-economic assistance.

Mr. Chairperson,

As we have reiterated many times before, the migration crisis can be resolved only through a comprehensive approach and the engagement of the entire international community. IOM, UN, EU and all concerned parties, particularly the countries of origin, countries on the migration route and countries of destination, need to work together. In this regard, Serbia, as a candidate country for EU membership, will continue to fulfil its international obligations and is committed to the establishment of a common policy aimed at managing the migration crisis and stands ready to undertake further measures for a comprehensive solution agreed by all EU member states.