

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, and Distinguished Colleagues:

To begin, I want to thank the Belgian Mission and Ambassadors de Crombrughe and Muylle for their work with the Council over the last three years. Sixty-five years ago, Belgium and the United States convened an international conference on migration with 14 other governments. As a result, today we now have a robust and much needed International Organization for Migration – with 166 member states.

I would also like to extend my congratulations to Ambassador Quinn and the Council Bureau on their election and to welcome the newest IOM member state, the Kingdom of Tonga, and all new observer organizations.

We're meeting today and over the coming days to take stock of this organization – our organization, to celebrate its 65 years of service, and to look forward to challenges and opportunities on the horizon. Throughout its history, IOM has stood out as an organization that achieves success through concrete action. I want to take a quick moment to recognize the progress made over the last eight years under the leadership of Director General Swing.

In 2008, IOM began an effort to build a stronger and more responsive organization. Together IOM tackled structural improvements, budget reform, and steps to enhance the IOM-UN relationship. This resulted in IOM becoming a related organization of the United Nations, formalized at the historic Summit on September 19 in New York.

We improved the capacity of the organization to serve and assist vulnerable migrants around the world. We developed the new Migrants in Countries in Crisis guidelines; launched the Migration Emergency Funding Mechanism; and, at the Leader's Summit on Refugees at the UN General Assembly this past September, IOM and UNHCR introduced the Emerging Resettlement Countries Joint Support Mechanism. We welcomed IOM efforts to develop new guidance for its operations: the Migration Crisis Operational Framework, the Migration Governance Framework and the development of new strategies such as private sector engagement and the revision of IOM's gender strategy. And, we commend IOM for its continuing work, both internally and with other humanitarian agencies, to implement the Grand Bargain commitments and thus help make the humanitarian system more effective and efficient.

For 65 years IOM has been our vital partner in this work. Indeed, the preamble to IOM's Constitution – almost prophetically – acknowledges the need to ensure orderly migration. IOM is entering a new era as a related-organization of the United Nations. In joining the UN, IOM member states expect IOM will coordinate more with UN agencies. We have insisted that IOM retain its all-important flexibility and independence. We hope that as IOM and the UN implement this new agreement, they will be guided by the same dedication to openness and partnership we share with IOM; today's migration challenges require nothing less.

The United States is proud to have worked with other member states to make this all happen.

These are indeed impressive accomplishments. Yet, we must not be complacent, for reports continue to be made on a daily basis of human trafficking, of migrants lost at sea, of unaccompanied child migrants and of xenophobic violence. We are compelled to press ahead with our shared agenda to promote safe, regular migration for the benefit of all.

Member states must ensure IOM has the guidance and support it needs as a member-state led organization. We do this by maintaining dialogue with the IOM administration, monitoring progress on reform efforts, and working together to address new challenges and to set new policies. We look forward to continuing this engagement through a thoughtful and considered exchange as we work to update the IOM Strategy.

We need to apply the same practical mindset to future discussions on the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration called for in the New York Declaration adopted by the UN General Assembly by taking advantage of the operational expertise of IOM to inform deliberations and by focusing on concrete actionable areas on which states can reach consensus. We support IOM taking a lead role in the global migration compact discussions, and hope to see a modalities document soon that will outline this role.

We are here today because we recognize, 65 years later, that IOM is more relevant than ever. Migration is multi-faceted and complex, and IOM has proven its value in bringing states together to find real solutions, build capacity, and spur us all to respond as an international community and help the world's most vulnerable migrants.

Mr. Chairman,

As a nation of immigrants, the United States has been a strong supporter of IOM since it was established in 1951. We remain thankful to have IOM as a strategic partner working to advance our goals of legal, orderly, and safe migration. Thank you.