

## CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Thank you Madam Chair. The Netherlands aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union and adds the following in its national capacity.

Let me first congratulate you, Ambassador Maurás Perez, as well as the other members of the bureau, on Monday's election. We look forward to working with all of you. My delegation would also like to extend a warm welcome to the new members of the IOM family, the Republic of Cuba and the Cook Islands, as well as to the State of Kuwait as an observer state and the other observers.

Madam Chair, this year migration has been at the forefront of the political debate in the Netherlands, and I am sure the same applies to the majority of delegations in the room. This is reflected, among others, in the lengthy section on migration in the coalition agreement of our recently installed government. IOM is one of the very few organisations mentioned by name in that agreement as a partner – which says a lot about the importance our government attaches to it. For over two decades, the Netherlands and IOM have worked together closely on a large number of projects, amongst which our ongoing strong and much-valued cooperation on voluntary return and reintegration.

Madam Chair, migration has become a bigger theme than ever, and IOM as an organisation has echoed this growth with a strong increase in budget, members, staff and programmes, as was clearly outlined by the Director-General on Monday. A quick glance through IOM's annual report shows the broad and diverse range of its efforts to assist both governments and migrants all over the world. These vary from

regular migration management activities to protracted displacement crises, and from long-term development programmes to the urgent humanitarian repatriation of migrants from conflict areas. IOM continues to respond to the ever-growing needs and wishes of its member states and of migrants themselves, often in complex and challenging, and sometimes outright dangerous situations. The Netherlands wishes to express its compliments and sincere appreciation for IOM successfully taking up this increasingly dynamic role.

Concurrently, IOM has in recent years experienced substantial changes. Most importantly, of course, its accession to the UN family, as a UN-related organisation, in 2016. But also the task ascribed to IOM to service the process towards the Global Compact for Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration. The manner in which IOM has contributed to the Compact process thus far only strengthens our conviction – which is shared by many other delegations, as can be derived from the discussions this week -, that IOM, as the global lead agency on migration, should play a key role in the Compact's implementation and follow-up.

These developments have consequences for IOM as an organisation, which is still widely regarded as a predominantly operational agency. The Netherlands agrees with the Director-General's comments that IOM's policy efforts need to be more substantial. A more strategic policy role should go hand in hand with, and not compromise, IOM's efficiency, flexibility and can-do mentality, which we believe constitute IOM's true added value. Nevertheless, precisely IOM's unparalleled experience in the field and expertise on an extremely broad range of migration issues can provide a valuable basis for a strengthened strategic policy role.

One way for the members to assist IOM in the endeavour to translate

its vast field experience into strategic policy advice is by considering the provision of more flexible funding to the organisation. The Netherlands accordingly already provides softly earmarked contributions to IOM's work on the Displacement Tracking Matrix and for its role in support of the Global Compact on Migration, and is willing to explore further possibilities for this kind of support.

Madam Chair, in closing, I would like to express our appreciation to Director-General Swing for his comprehensive report to this Council and more generally for his able leadership of the organisation. He truly personifies IOM's dynamic character. Let me reiterate that the Netherlands remains committed to working constructively with IOM, including through our government-wide policy dialogue with IOM at the national level, in the defining years ahead.

Thank you.