

Thank you very much Mr. Chairman.

We thank the Director-General for presenting his Report to the Council and, while fully sharing the views that were expressed on behalf of the European Union and its Member States, we will make some additional comments in our national capacity.

Portugal is glad to see that IOM is growing, not only in membership – and we warmly welcome Cuba and the Cook Islands – but also in its visibility and communication within the UN system and to the world at large. We have you, Mr. Director-General, to thank for the consolidation of the organization's role, and increase in prestige, in all its areas of involvement, and we extend our sincere appreciation to all IOM staff and leadership.

The organization has shown consistent capacity to deliver on its mandate, as well as interest in exploring new issues, at the speed of changing circumstances on the ground and also in capitals. Adaptability and pragmatism have become bywords for IOM's role both in political processes and discussions regarding migration, on the one side, and in providing support to those who need it, on the other. As the Director-General mentioned in his presentation, the organization has 97% of its staff on the ground. IOM also plays the important role of keeping us, its members, grounded and focused on the fundamental issues of migration in our days and strongly attuned to the needs of its Member States.

Migration as an issue, but more importantly migrants as individual human beings, have been hard pressed and assailed by intensifying anti-migrant and anti-refugee rhetoric. We join you, Mr. Director-General, in condemning such political profiteering when lives and dignity are at stake. We commend the clarity with which IOM has proclaimed its commitment to safe, dignified and regular migration, which is also our own commitment.

Reality will not conform itself to the material means and the skills that are at any given moment made available to IOM, quite the opposite. That is why Portugal supports the Director-General's assessment of how IOM can and should continue to develop in the coming years, in particular regarding a stronger policy development component. We look forward to the ideas that will emerge in the future in that regard.

In recent years, Portugal's relationship with IOM has grown more solid and more ambitious, with the organization assuming an increasingly important role in our initiatives on migration, in particular those of a humanitarian character, as well as those connected with solidarity with other member states of the European Union.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, a word of appreciation, but not farewell, to Ambassador William Swing. Your work, your words and your example will long outlast the years you have served IOM and its members and will continue to inspire us in overcoming these troubled times. As the international community prepares for the difficult process of adopting the GCM and shaping the post-GCM period, the role of IOM, and in particular of its new leadership, will be more than ever important and decisive.

That is why the election in July of a new Director-General that will have the difficult mission of replacing the excellent work done by Willian Swing will be a very important

and decisive moment for the future of IOM. Portugal intends to give an important contribution for this debate and for the future of OIM.

Thank you.