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Statement by H.E. Amb. Gian Lorenzo CORNADO,

Permanent Representative,

at the 109th Session of IOM Council

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Chair, Director-General, Deputy Director-General, distinguished Delegates, Italy aligns itself with the statement made by the EU Delegation on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

At the outset, allow me to express our sincerest appreciation to the outgoing Chair of the Council, Ambassador Eguiguren of Chile, for his strong engagement and to congratulate the newly elected Bureau. A warm welcome goes to the Republic of Uzbekistan as new Member State and to the new Observers, the International Monetary Fund and the International Emergency and Development Aid, for joining the IOM family.

Chair, we are witnessing the highest levels of movement on record: in 2017 about 258 million people were reported to be living outside their country of birth, compared to 173 million in 2000. Economic conditions are important drivers of migration. People migrate for a variety of reasons including the search for better economic opportunities, education, family reunion and escaping violence. Migration is as complex as it is diverse, so to predict the impact of policy changes might be problematic unless more robust research is done and more reliable data collected. In this context we wish to commend IOM for issuing its ninth World Migration Report, a useful and widely appreciated reference, all the more important this year, being the first since the Organization has become the United Nations' migration agency.

Chair, IOM is for Italy a strategic partner in the implementation of our common integrated strategy to manage migration flows. In countries of transit such as Libya and Niger, our common approach based on providing humanitarian support and assisted voluntary returns for migrants has been a success and we are committed to strengthening it in the future.

Chair, the decision to migrate is often made with inadequate information. Migrants may therefore have a distorted notion of the possibilities of employment and quality of life in countries of destination, as well as insufficient information on the costs and, more importantly, on the potential risks of the trip. Smugglers, recruitment agencies, and others with a financial stake in encouraging migration may present a biased picture of the migration experience, and poor information increases the potential for migrants to suffer from fraud and abuse. In this regard, it is worth highlighting that thanks to the fruitful cooperation between the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation and IOM, the latest edition of “CinemArena”, a mobile cinema initiative launched as far back as 2002, was inaugurated in Rome two weeks ago. The project, now in its sixteenth year, involves a caravan travelling through the most remote African routes in Senegal, Ivory Coast, Guinea, The Gambia, Nigeria and Sudan bringing outdoor cinema events to over 200 villages. The main objective is indeed to promote an information campaign demonstrating the risks of irregular migration to avert the serious consequences of misinformed choices. The 2018 edition of this 2 million Euro worth project, financed by the Africa Fund, will address migration by focussing on the main countries of origin of migrants arriving by sea to Europe. Events will include the screening of movies and awareness-raising videos on irregular migration, followed by workshops, theatre performances and other activities.

If the future of migration is mixed, as IOM has repeatedly underlined, it means the challenges of mixed migration as a phenomenon are bound to increase. This phenomenon amplifies the need for international cooperation in refugee and migration policy, and for more targeted and innovative approaches to the dilemmas of mixed movements. IOM’s 5-pillar strategy for mixed migration is an effective way of responding to the negative consequences of irregular migration, promoting a rights-based approach, supporting governments, and striving to minimize violations against individuals in mixed migration flows.

Chair, last week the Fourth Edition of MED-Dialogues, an annual high-level initiative, took place in Rome with the participation, among other distinguished guests, of Director-General Vitorino. The future of the Mediterranean region was the main theme of the event, which hosted 9 plenary sessions building upon 4 main areas of discussion: Shared Security, Shared Prosperity, Migration, Media, Science and Culture. We look forward to continuing this type of interaction with major stakeholders and rely on IOM's invaluable cooperation, with a view to contributing to the shaping of a better world for future generations.

I thank you for your attention Chair.