

**COUNCIL**  
**First Special Session**

**STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR GENERAL**

**Mr William Lacy Swing**

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**Geneva**



## STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR GENERAL

1. Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, it is an honour to welcome you to this Special Session of the Council of the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

2. Let me begin by expressing, on my behalf and that of all my IOM colleagues, our sincere appreciation to the members of the IOM Council Bureau: the Chairperson, Ambassador Bertrand de Crombrughe (Belgium); the First Vice-Chairperson, Ambassador John Paton Quinn (Australia); the Second Vice-Chairperson, Ambassador Marta Maurás (Chile); and the Rapporteur, Ambassador Mohamed Auajjar (Morocco).

3. I would like to speak briefly on three points: universality of membership, upcoming tasks that lie ahead, and IOM–UN relations.

4. **Universality of membership.** It is my honour and pleasure to welcome our new Member States: Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and the People’s Republic of China. The admission of three new Member States brings us one step closer to universality of membership. It places the Organization in a stronger position to continue providing solutions to increasingly complex migration challenges. This brings the total number of Member States to 165, in this 65th year of the Organization’s existence.

5. **Upcoming tasks.** The continuing growth of IOM membership means that we have to be readier than ever, as a strong and growing IOM community, to address collectively the multifaceted challenges and opportunities of migration, which is inevitable, necessary and desirable.

6. You will recall that 2015 was of special interest to migration practitioners. This was, to a large extent, due to the exceptionally large movements of migrants and refugees across an arc of instability stretching from West Africa, through the Mediterranean, much of Europe, the Middle East all the way to the Bay of Bengal. However, 2015 was also the setting for an exceptional sequence of international conferences acknowledging one after the other the importance of migration in many areas of global concern:

- Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (Sendai, March), which focused on disaster and climate risk management in the context of sustainable development and adopted the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030;
- Third International Conference on Financing for Development (Addis Ababa, July), a summit-level meeting to address the key financial and related issues pertaining to global development;
- United Nations Sustainable Development Summit (New York, September), which adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
- United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP21) (November/December, Paris), which negotiated the Paris Agreement on climate change.

7. All these major events paid considerable attention to migration, with references to migrants and displaced people even being included in their outcome documents.
8. This cycle of activity continues in 2016. The World Humanitarian Summit was recently held in Istanbul, and we are now looking forward with hope and expectation to the 19 September General Assembly high-level plenary meeting on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants. Beyond that, Habitat III will take place in October.
9. All of these events provide us with an opportunity to address migration through large international humanitarian and development agendas. These are opportunities that we cannot afford to miss. Our closer relationship with the United Nations will require, in particular, a concerted effort on the part of all our membership to ensure that migration contributes fully to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.
10. We have 65 years of experience; we have the frameworks and tools which you have helped develop and refine, such as the Migration Crisis Operational Framework and the Migration Governance Framework; and lastly, we have the partnerships that will help us achieve the objectives we have set out. All of these elements will ensure that your organization delivers on what you have mandated it to do.
11. **IOM–UN relations.** Council Resolution No. 1309 adopted by the Council at its 106th Session requested me to approach the United Nations and “to develop [...] a way in which the legal basis of the relationship between IOM and the United Nations could be improved”, based on specific essential elements.
12. The Resolution further requested me to “develop proposals for improved legal arrangements with the United Nations which the Council could evaluate and upon which it could act at one of its future sessions”.
13. In accordance with these requests, I had an exchange of correspondence with the United Nations Secretary-General. As I moved from informal, non-binding discussion to formal negotiations with the United Nations Deputy Secretary-General, our Legal Counsel and Director of Resources Management reached out to their respective counterparts in the United Nations to establish a mutually satisfactory basis for improved cooperation.
14. The discussions led to the development of a draft document that was shared with, commented upon and enriched by Member States during several meetings of the Working Group on IOM–UN Relations and the IOM Strategy. Following a meeting of the Working Group on 24 June 2016, a final consolidated draft agreement was circulated to all Member States. I recommend the approval of this agreement.