



AUSTRALIA

General Debate Statement to the 94th Session of the IOM Council

*Delivered by
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General Debate: Australian Statement

Migration Challenges and IOM

Mr Chairman, this year's Council meeting takes place against a background of an impending election in mid 2008 for the principal leadership position in the organization. During this time we should seek to minimise any broader uncertainty that could impact on the effectiveness of IOM. We believe that it is more important than ever to focus on preserving the organization's key strengths, to ensure it is well placed to meet the migration challenges which we all face. I would therefore like to spend some time reflecting on these migration challenges and IOM's strengths.

A key feature of today's globalising world is the changing nature of international migration. Economic incentives are influencing migration flows as people seek opportunities in the global labour market through both regular and irregular migration channels. Demographic trends, economic disparities between countries, and trade liberalisation necessitating a mobile labour force are all having an impact. There is increasing competition for skilled labour in developed countries and greater South/South migration as more job opportunities become available in emerging economies. More people today are moving temporarily, often staying longer, but then returning to their countries of origin.

These shifting trends impact on migration management as States seek to balance the need to control borders, facilitate movement for legitimate purposes such as trade and labour, and harness the potential benefits of a highly mobile population. This year has seen the international community focus on the opportunities and challenges that this presents. In particular, we discussed at this year's IOM International Dialogue on Migration, the theme of "Migration Management in the Evolving Global Economy." The inaugural Global Forum on Migration and Development was another example of States taking an interest in how migration can be managed to the benefit of everyone.

Mr Chairman, Australia firmly believes IOM is uniquely placed to contribute toward the management of international migration. It is the only inter-governmental organization with an across-the-board migration mandate. It has the ability to bring States together, here at Council or as part of regional consultative processes and workshops, to share information and provide opportunities for cooperation. With its global network of offices, and extensive policy and practical expertise, there is no better organization than IOM to assist States to manage migration in an effective and efficient way.

We have set the foundation for IOM to continue to lead in the field of migration with the successful finalisation of the IOM strategy document, governance framework and programme and budget arrangements. The strategy highlights the diversity of IOM's activities, and gives it continued flexibility to assist States to manage the evolving nature of migration challenges and opportunities. We welcome the preservation of IOM's successful fee-for-service structure, which makes it the service provider of choice when States choose to implement projects, and the creative way found to strengthen the 1035 Facility through the use of discretionary income. Looking forward, however, we would see voluntary funding for capacity building projects as the main way to expand these activities, consistent with the fee-for-service nature of the organisation and the limitations of discretionary income.

Mr Chairman, as Members of IOM we each have access to its considerable expertise and the ability to set the direction of the organization. With an expanding and diverse membership it is now more important than ever that IOM is adequately supported and allowed the flexibility to remain valuable to all its members. We have a shared responsibility to contribute annually to IOM's Administrative Budget to enable it to effectively deliver projects with well trained, supported and qualified staff. We commend IOM for its improvements to the Blue Book by linking it to the new strategy document and providing further analysis of its activities. This will enable a greater understanding of IOM's annual budget and programme environment.

Looking ahead to next year, it is important we all ensure that the natural uncertainty that comes with the election of a senior IOM official does not manifest itself in a way which undermines the fundamental strengths of the organization or hinders its delivery of services to the membership.

Well Managed Migration

Mr Chairman, we firmly believe that, provided it is carefully managed, migration can benefit both States and migrants. IOM is a key partner in assisting Australia to effectively deliver its managed migration programmes. Successive Australian governments have fine-tuned migration policy and programme settings in response to complex social, economic and other changes impacting on our nation. We see immigration as a key source of our social, cultural and economic strength.

Each year our migration programme is formulated taking into consideration the views of the community, business and our state and territory governments through an extensive consultation process. It is also based on ongoing research into Australian labour market conditions and on the impact of our migration policies. This ensures our programme is well informed and adapts to the changing demands in the labour market.

We were therefore pleased to have shared at this year's IOM intersessional workshop on the "Free Movement of Persons in Regional Integration Processes," an example of our migration programme's capacity to respond to the needs of business. The Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Business Travel Card assists in removing barriers to the flow of business people within the APEC region. It is a pragmatic and simple solution to facilitating the movement of a low-risk group.

Capacity Building Partnerships with IOM

Mr Chairman, the success of any migration programme, including those intended to facilitate labour mobility, depends on the capacity of a State to design and manage the programme so that it meets its stated policy objectives.

In recognition of this, Australia is committed to capacity building work in our Asia Pacific region through not only APEC, but bilaterally and through regional consultative processes such as the Bali Process and the Inter-governmental Asia-Pacific Consultations on Refugees, Displaced Persons and Migrants (APC).

We fund IOM to assist us in delivering a diverse range of capacity building projects. For example, in Cambodia we are engaging IOM in the provision of a mentoring and training project with the Cambodian Department of Immigration. The mentor will deliver a programme of assistance to support improved border management at border checkpoints and will oversee a programme of immigration training.

In East Timor we provide support through IOM to improve governance, border security and migration management.

Mr Chairman, Australia considers IOM an important partner, and wishes to see its key strengths and extensive capabilities in the field of migration retained into the future, in particular as we move through this election period.

Thank you.