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International Organisation for Migration

United Kingdom Statement

at the

IOM Council

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UK Statement to the IOM Council 2008

Delivered by Judith Macgregor, Director of Migration, FCO – 2 Dec 2008

Thank you Mr Chairman.

Let me begin by offering my full support for the statement made by France on behalf of the European Union.

I am very pleased to represent the UK at this 96th IOM Council.

I would especially like to congratulate the new Director General on his appointment. We look forward very much to working closely with you and fully support your three objectives: to strengthen member States' ownership of the Organisation, to promote partnerships and to improve human resources management which is essential to the operational success of the IOM.

I am pleased to say that we have recently put before our Parliament legislation which will confer diplomatic immunities and privileges on IOM staff working in the UK. This will bring their status into line with staff of other international organisations represented in the UK.

I would also like to join with others in thanking the current Deputy Director General for all her work and support to the Organisation over the past 9 years.

Mr Chairman,

2008 has been a packed year for international migration policy.

The second Global Forum on Migration and Development held in October in the Philippines was very encouraging: I would like to thank the forum organisers for their coordination work and I look forward to next year's event in Greece. I am sure it will prove an opportunity to share and develop best practice on practical projects with colleagues from around the world.

And, just last week I attended the second Euro African Conference in Paris with the UK Immigration Minister, Phil Woolas, who was pleased to have the opportunity to agree a Declaration which provided a rich framework for migration partnership activity between Europe and Africa.

And of course the EU Migration Pact –I will echo my colleague from the French Presidency when I say that the Pact has reaffirmed that migration is undoubtedly at the centre of the EU's external and internal policy-making and indeed it will remain so throughout the Czech and Swedish Presidencies and beyond.

The UK's migration policy is threefold. In line with the Global Approach to Migration - which was reaffirmed just last week by the EU Justice and Home Affairs Ministers – we believe migration policy must:

- Tackle the root causes of irregular immigration and give irregular migrants the chance to return home with dignity and secure plans for the future.
- Promote mobility through legal migration. Our new Points Based System has consolidated and simplified legal migration channels to the UK. It has helped us identify where we have skill shortages and provides clear guidance on the requirements for those wishing to join us.
- Enhance synergies between migration and development.

These are all areas where we have worked with IOM.

The UK's most significant involvement with the IOM since the last Council remains the implementation of UK Assisted Voluntary Programmes for those who do not have the right to remain in the UK. We have worked closely with IOM to deliver the Return and Rebuild Programme in Afghanistan and Iraq - this is a new and innovative programme which has been set up to tackle housing shortages which have proved a key barrier to returns to these countries.

We have also worked closely with the IOM and the European Commission on upstream AVR for stranded migrants in transit countries. IOM's project in Libya has helped with documentation, travel back to migrants' country of origin and reintegration assistance. I am pleased to note that since 2006, 2500 people have returned home through this project.

Mr Chairman, the IOM's work to provide humanitarian assistance to those displaced by conflict or natural disaster is to be commended. In Zimbabwe, IOM is a trusted partner providing effective humanitarian assistance to people displaced by political violence, as well as much needed information and services to migrants. We greatly appreciate IOM's rapid response to the current cholera outbreak in Zimbabwe.

We also welcome IOM's engagement in the reform of the international humanitarian system, in particular its role as global lead agency for the Camp Co-ordination/Camp Management cluster in natural disasters. We encourage IOM to continue working in a spirit of partnership with UNHCR, International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent and other agencies. And we encourage IOM to look for a balance between its project-based funding and the need for sustainable capacity.

But we cannot rest on our laurels. Our citizens and stakeholders look to us not only for a commitment to act, but for action itself. IOM is a key partner in delivering projects on the ground and I would like to thank IOM staff around the world who are constantly helping to deliver UK objectives in often challenging circumstances.

Mr Chairman, you spoke of the future.

I particularly welcome the dialogue you have begun with all the IOM 's member states, regional groups and IOM staff on what are the actual and real migration challenges that present themselves, what should be the priorities, and how the organisation can best respond to the membership's needs.

This open minded approach is in our view key to an effective evaluation. The UK agrees that a prime consideration is the need for the IOM to retain its comparative advantage and ability to respond efficiently, professionally and fast to members' requests. In this we remain of the view that the organisation's chief assets lie in the delivery of operational expertise in the field rather than in the provision of standards or policy norms.

These are uncertain economic times for all of us. But as you state, we should avoid hasty conclusions and adopt a measured and balanced approach to global migration. We should seek to develop a better understanding and better evidence based approach. We therefore welcome the World Migration Report as a handbook for policy makers and migration practitioners.

Concretely speaking, we see a need ahead for policy and institutional coherence for migration both as an economic issue and to maximise the benefits of migration and development.

We continue to see a strong role for IOM to work with governments to involve migration and development experts in Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, national development plans and donor development plans. IOM's expertise and global network will be a valuable asset in this area.

And there are other areas where coherence is essential: working with diasporas and migrants living abroad; strengthening remittance flows with a particular focus on strong financial institutions; and reintegration of migrants in the context of legal and irregular migration. These are areas where we can and should focus globally. I look forward to working with the IOM to do so.

Mr Chairman

We appreciate the interactive spirit of this Council and your prompt response to our interventions. We look forward to an update on your recommendations at the Spring Council.

Thank you.