



Australian Government

Minister for Immigration and Citizenship

IOM 100th COUNCIL SESSION

**AUSTRALIAN GENERAL DEBATE STATEMENT
6 December 2011**

Mr Chairman, it is an honour to attend the 100th Session of the IOM Council to commemorate an important milestone, IOM's 60th anniversary.

On behalf of the Government of Australia, I commend IOM for its significant achievements over the last 60 years of service. IOM has become a leading international agency working with governments and civil society to advance the understanding of migration issues, encourage social and economic development through migration, and uphold the human dignity and well-being of migrants.

IOM and Australia

Mr Chairman, IOM and Australia have a long and successful history of cooperation. Australia was one of the sixteen countries that formed the original membership.

Since then, IOM's open engagement with its members and improved partnerships with other international organisations have further strengthened the organisation, resulting in the continued delivery of high quality services to its members. This is also reflected in the growth in IOM membership, which has increased significantly since 1951. Australia is pleased to see the increasing level of interest and participation by States in the IOM and extends a warm welcome to the new members and observers.

Mr Chairman, IOM is an important partner to Australia. We value your cooperation and ability to deliver a wide range of services for the effective, efficient and humane management of migration in all its forms.

Australia has demonstrated its commitment to cooperation with IOM by providing significant funding to the organisation. For the past five years, Australia has been one of the top ten contributors towards IOM projects.

In July this year the Australian Government welcomed the IOM Director-General Ambassador William Swing to Australia. It was a privilege for me to meet with Ambassador Swing during his visit, which provided an excellent opportunity to further strengthen our relationship with IOM. This relationship is important as we pursue our shared goal of better managing the increasingly complex movement of people.

I hope that our partnership will continue to flourish in the coming years.

Managed Migration

Mr Chairman, Australia believes strongly in the benefits of coherent managed migration policies.

This belief underpins our continued commitment to a permanent migration program of up to 185,000 skilled and family migrants per year, supplemented by a refugee resettlement program of 13,750 humanitarian entrants per year.

These policies are supported by comprehensive integration programs and early access to Australian citizenship, to ensure, as far as possible, that migrants are able to become full participants in our harmonious, multicultural society.

Mr Chairman, here with me today are resettlement success stories Ameer and his brother Ghaith and the Principal of their High School in Sydney, Mr Robert Mulas. They are but two of over 750,000 people who have found refuge from persecution in Australia since 1945. While those who have found refuge in Australia have benefited from a new and safe life, Australia has unquestionably also benefited from the social, economic and cultural contribution of refugees like Ameer and Ghaith over those decades and will continue to do so.

Around 40 per cent of Mr Mulas' school body consists of refugee students. He runs a community project for their parents called 'Parent Café', teaching important everyday skills. He recognises that his school can act as a focal point of support for the local refugee community and that a stronger local community can, in turn, strengthen the school. Such initiatives provide refugees with a way to integrate confidently into the Australian community. Having faced the darkest acts of humanity, refugees hold genuine human ambitions, a resilient spirit and a desire to succeed.

Regional Cooperation Framework (RCF)

Mr Chairman, the Asia-Pacific region experiences the full range of human displacement challenges.

There is recognition among States that the challenges of people smuggling and irregular migration cannot be addressed in isolation and require countries

forming cooperative arrangements under the auspices of regional and international frameworks.

In addressing these challenges, Australia is committed to working with IOM and regional partners to improve consistency in the treatment of asylum seekers and refugees, to undermine the people smuggling trade and so enhance the region's response to irregular migration.

On 30 March 2011, Ministers at the 4th Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime ministerial conference agreed to establish a Regional Cooperation Framework (RCF).

Australia commends IOM for the vital role the organisation has played in developing and shaping the RCF and securing its endorsement.

We welcome IOM's efforts in relation to the establishment of the Regional Support Office (RSO). The RSO is a key initiative to take forward operationalisation of the RCF and represents an important arrangement to support and strengthen practical cooperation on refugee protection and international migration.

We are committed to working with Indonesia, our Bali Process Co-chairs, and other Steering Group members, including IOM, to take the RSO forward.

Conclusion

Mr Chairman, IOM is uniquely placed to work with States to help develop coherence in migration policies at the national, regional and international level. Australia sees IOM's future as continuing to be a responsive, States led, fee for service, migration expert organisation that remains outside the UN system. We believe these to be the very strengths that made IOM successful.

Australia thanks IOM for the strong and ongoing partnership, and for being flexible, adaptable and effective at delivering activities that respond to the needs of Member States. We value this ability and believe that it is a great advantage that makes the organisation well prepared to respond to a variety of issues.

Mr Chairman, Australia is confident that IOM will continue to be a leader in managing migration effectively, efficiently and humanely.

I pay tribute to the dedication of IOM staff and the organisation's many achievements over the last 60 years - and, on behalf of the Australian Government, I congratulate you on reaching this significant milestone.

Thank you.