

MICEM/8/2000

STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR GENERAL

Mr. Brunson McKinley

at the Eightieth Session of the Council

28-29 November 2000

Geneva

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Greetings to Delegations

Congratulations to new Officers

Welcome to new Member States and observers

Accomplishments of the year 2000

1. IOM has continued to expand in 2000. Membership, operational funding levels, numbers of offices and projects are all up. Increasingly, governments are coming to recognize migration as a crucially important policy issue and IOM as an essential element in migration management. I should like here briefly to mention some of the more significant developments of this year.
2. In Africa, our efforts at regional migration management are beginning to bear fruit. The Migration Dialogue for Southern Africa, the creation of our respected former colleague Shun Chetty, whose work we acknowledge and honour, is up and running. In connection with partner organizations, MIDSA has just conducted a successful forum of SADC countries in Mbabane. The first of many planned capacity-building activities in the region, this seminar was devoted to "Migration, Integration and Border Management".
3. In October in Dakar, governments of West Africa launched a new migration management process for the ECOWAS region. The Dakar Declaration contains an ambitious agenda of training, technical assistance, counter-trafficking, health and post-conflict measures. Its existence speaks to the growing realization in Africa that migration, especially forced migration, puts enormous strains on developing societies and requires vigorous responses.
4. To support the development efforts of African States through return migration of their qualified nationals abroad, IOM is vigorously preparing for a new phase of its programme for Return of Qualified African Nationals. An RQAN seminar in Gabon next month will determine whether this important development effort will continue next year.
5. IOM's post-conflict specialists are present in Guinea-Bissau, Angola and other war-torn countries. We stand ready to assist Africa both in the healing process and in the resumption of normal migration relations among nations. My consultations with the Secretary General of the OAU in Addis Ababa last month convinced me that the issue of migration is gaining prominence and importance throughout the continent. And as you know, new Members are rapidly reinforcing IOM's already solid institutional base in Africa.

6. In Asia, where IOM is still relatively less prominent than the need for migration management would dictate, we are making good progress. The 1999 Bangkok Declaration has led to significant new attention to migration issues in signatory countries.

7. Indonesia, for example, hosted this year's meeting of the Manila Process, a gathering that mandated immediate efforts to raise Member-State capacity to cope with irregular migration and trafficking. IOM has concluded a detailed arrangement with Indonesia for the provision of migration services and opened offices there. Our new relationship with Indonesia is one key to our ability to work effectively in Timor.

8. The People's Republic of China intends to upgrade its contacts with IOM. Already making serious efforts to control smuggling of Chinese migrants, the PRC will work with IOM on this and other migration management challenges. The Republic of Korea is currently rethinking its labour migration policy and has asked for IOM's assistance. Japan, long a major supporter of IOM programmes throughout the world, continues to look to IOM in relation to managing migration challenges in the Asia and Pacific region.

9. South and South West Asia have big and important migration concerns. IOM is working to become more active there as well. We have signed a cooperation agreement with Pakistan. The Deputy Director General has visited Bangladesh and Sri Lanka to discuss new projects. We are exploring the possibility of assistance to Bhutan and Nepal to enhance capacity and permit progress towards the solution of their bilateral problems. Our efforts at cooperation with India continue.

10. In the interests of coordinating migration management and refugee questions throughout Asia, the Asia Pacific Consultations have concluded their annual conference this month by endorsing an ambitious programme of discussion for the year 2001.

11. In the Western Hemisphere, where it began, the regional approach to migration management is thriving. The Puebla Process grows deeper and more effective every year, with IOM as the lead implementing partner of the governments and NGOs active in the process. We manage the virtual secretariat and much of the programme activity mandated by the Puebla Process.

12. Conferences in Lima and Buenos Aires over the past year have made good progress towards the establishment of a South American consultative body comparable to Puebla. The Summit of the Americas has adopted migration as a theme, leading to expectations of an eventual hemisphere-wide management mechanism. This very week, a first meeting is taking place in Santo Domingo to assess interest in establishing a Caribbean regional process.

13. As the Western Hemisphere remains relatively free of wars and conflicts, IOM has concentrated its efforts, with notable success, in the areas of capacity building, training and policy advice. In Colombia, unfortunately, violence continues. IOM has undertaken major programmes on behalf of displaced persons there. We are also studying how to help affected neighbouring countries. We shall be ready to help if asked.

14. Coming closer to Geneva, there is much promising new activity to report. Our desire to help the nations of the Western Mediterranean manage their migration dynamics has met an encouraging response. With European Union funding, Headquarters and IOM Rome held a

regional seminar in Tunisia in September to explore cooperation between the Maghreb and the countries on the opposite shore of the Mediterranean. IOM intends shortly to open offices or start programmes in Tunis, Algiers and Rabat, with solid programme funding in sight.

15. In South East Europe, we have substantial ongoing programmes in Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and significant activities in almost every country of the region. We expect that the changes in Belgrade will lead to new possibilities for the Stability Pact and stand ready to cooperate fully with it.

16. In the former Soviet Union, we are encouraged by the establishment this year of a further follow-up mechanism to the 1996 Geneva Conference. We intend to continue our strong capacity-building effort throughout the region. We shall focus special attention on the three countries of the South Caucasus in a meeting early next year designed to forge a migration assistance relationship between the Caucasus and governments of Western Europe.

17. In the EU sphere, we are pleased to support the pioneering steps being taken by some governments to facilitate regular labour immigration into their countries, which can serve both to meet their immediate labour market needs and support the growth and development efforts of sending countries. I am thinking here especially of the German Green Card initiative and the Italian training and integration programme for Albanian labour migrants.

18. More and more European governments are turning to IOM for support in the area of migrant integration, including public information campaigns to counter anti-foreigner and xenophobic sentiments in host communities – an issue high on the EC agenda for good migration management.

19. In the Middle East, IOM made a concerted, urgent effort to get ready for the migration challenges sure to result from a peace settlement. In consultation with the Government of Israel, we sent an expert to begin planning for solutions with the Palestinian Authority. Like all of you, IOM laments the new outbreak of violence that has forced a postponement of this activity.

20. The Middle East remains nevertheless a major potential growth area for IOM. In two weeks I shall travel to Cairo to sign a cooperation agreement with the Secretary General of the Arab League. The Syrian Government has recently given us permission to open an office in Damascus.

21. We have just signed the papers for substantial new programme activity in Egypt. The Integrated Migration Management System, funded by Italy, will help the Egyptian Government set up more effective data gathering, analysis and dissemination mechanisms.

IOM Services and core activities

22. This brief and incomplete review shows how much my colleagues have accomplished this year. I could have listed many other activities to prove the point. I kept the focus geographic on purpose to emphasize both the global reach of IOM and the lead role of IOM Missions in the field. It speaks well for the policy of decentralization that our highly-independent teams have succeeded so well in identifying and addressing the concerns of migrants and governments.

23. Another way to present the same material would have been functionally, Service by Service. This approach would make another point that I want to emphasize - that each of our six Services played a part in the growth of IOM in 2000. Our experts in transportation, migration health, capacity building, information, assisted returns and counter-trafficking have developed the profile and credibility we need to attract new support.

24. The year 2000 also saw the emergence and solidification of a new set of activities under the heading "services to migrants in a diaspora". Our work on the migrant component of elections in Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina this year, like earlier similar efforts including Timor, have allowed us to develop a recognized expertise in out-of-country voting.

25. Another example of "services to migrants in a diaspora" is the German Forced Labour Compensation Programme. This is a big and challenging programme, but success will help our German partners bring settlement to a thorny issue and a measure of comfort to many of the same migrants, now citizens of almost all your countries, for whom IOM was created.

26. Emergencies require special mention. IOM prides itself on its quick reaction capability. Apart from questions of money, it has often been IOM's work in crises that got us in, made the desired good impression and helped us to stay on to develop lasting migration management programmes. A humanitarian organization's emergency response capacity requires constant attention. We shall place this subject on the agenda for our spring Executive Committee meeting and circulate a paper for discussion. While on the subject of emergencies, I would like to pay tribute to all IOM staff in Indonesia who played a key role in the swift evacuation from West Timor in September, not only of our own people, but also of other United Nations and non-governmental organizations' staff, following the brutal murder of three UNHCR staff members.

27. Finally under the heading of Services, a word about research, an area of change and progress in 2000. IOM's first *World Migration Report* appeared this year. We expect it will become a point of reference for the public and policy debate on migration that is sure to grow in years to come. We have focused the majority of our research on specific migration management challenges. As a service organization, we think IOM research should be the essential first step in problem solving.

Management questions

28. The debate over zero nominal growth in the Administrative Part of the Budget has dominated the dialogue between Member States and the Administration this year. The Subcommittee on Budget and Finance, meeting last month, recommended an increase of 5 per cent over the figure at which the Administrative Part of the Budget has been frozen for the past five years, the new level to apply for two years, 2001 and 2002. This result produces both a degree of satisfaction and difficult new management challenges, at a time when membership and work are increasing rapidly.

29. On the positive side, IOM's Member States have recognized the fact that a dynamic, growing organization like ours needs to strengthen its core administrative services in relation to its expanded activities. More Members, more programmes and more offices require higher levels of performance in financial and personnel management, research, training, inspection and evaluation and other core management functions.

30. The Administration is grateful for the willingness of Member States to acknowledge these needs and grant IOM an exception to the general practice of freezing or reducing the administrative budgets of international organizations.

31. We also share the desire of Member States to see more of our Discretionary Income used as seed money for programme activity in developing and transition countries and shall put this idea into practice next year. We call on Member States to contribute additional funds to the Organization for this purpose, as several of you have already announced you intend to do.

32. On the side of challenges, we must all be aware that the increase of 5 per cent falls short of the amount we need - in our present configuration - to provide effective core support to our growing activities. In the past, Discretionary Income has been used to make up the shortfall. Now we need to consider other ways to make ends meet. In the near future we may have to implement new cost-saving measures.

33. One idea is to transfer some Headquarters' functions to countries where they can be performed more economically. We may also have to adjust some personnel policies - like the automatic granting of permanent contracts - to account for the new realities, always seeking to protect IOM's dedicated employees, its greatest resource.

34. This year's serious and responsible debate over the level of IOM's Administrative Part of the Budget has produced a balanced result. Member States have acknowledged the Administration's greater needs while insisting on stringent management and even greater attention to efficiency and cost-effectiveness. I believe the outcome of this debate reflects well on the Organization. I wish to thank the Chairman of the Subcommittee on Budget and Finance for his outstanding work and congratulate the representatives of Member States who persevered in bringing a difficult task to a successful conclusion.

Other international organizations

35. As you know, IOM maintains close relations with a range of international organizations interested in different parts of the broad migration policy spectrum. I want to mention several developments from this year.

36. The International Labour Office shares with IOM a profound interest in organized labour migration, migrant rights, training programmes, capacity building, prevention of trafficking and protection of abused migrants. This year IOM has deepened its dialogue with ILO, both at Headquarters and in the field. ILO is well established in regions of interest to IOM. Through cooperation, IOM can benefit from ILO's broad base and rich experience. IOM brings to the partnership our operational experience and our hands-on approach. We look forward to a project-oriented partnership with ILO, especially in developing and transition countries.

37. Another new partnership brings IOM together with the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee, an international organization we welcome as an IOM observer today. With member governments throughout Asia and the Middle East and in much of Africa, AALCC has an important role to play in addressing the treatment of migrant workers in law and in practice. Its membership includes major countries of origin, transit and destination. In April 2001, IOM will

organize a one-day discussion of migration issues at the ministerial-level AALCC General Assembly in Bandung, Indonesia.

38. The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees is our partner in most emergency humanitarian operations. I pay tribute to High Commissioner Sadako Ogata for ten years of exemplary leadership in the humanitarian arena and congratulate her successor, former Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers of the Netherlands. IOM will continue its long-standing cooperation with UNHCR in the spirit of humanitarian solidarity, including through the new agreement, concluded last June, that provides for using IOM transport services in most refugee movements.

Fiftieth anniversary

39. The year 2001 marks the fiftieth anniversary of IOM. Originally created as the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration at a ceremony in Brussels in December 1951, IOM has grown into a worldwide international body with representation and important activities on every continent. We are working with the Government of Belgium on a special event in Brussels. This is highly appropriate but not enough. To mark the new character of IOM, we need in addition to develop commemorative activities not only in the original Member States but especially in the new, growth areas for IOM - Asia and Africa. I invite all Member States to consider how we can work together to use the anniversary to bring greater attention and better informed debate to migration issues in your part of the world.