

MICEM/6/2008

THE DIRECTOR GENERAL'S FIRST REPORT TO THE COUNCIL

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Ninety-sixth Session of the Council

2 – 5 December 2008

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1. It is a distinct honour and pleasure for me, as the new Director General of the International Organization for Migration, to make this introductory report to the Ninety-sixth Session of IOM Council.

A focus on consultation

2. My priority, during my first hectic weeks in office has been consulting, listening and tuning in to the needs, interests and concerns of Member States, our organizational partners and IOM staff.

3. I have had lively bilateral exchanges with Member States in Geneva and in State capitals and have held consultations with regional groupings of Permanent Missions in Geneva. I have had other fruitful encounters in multilateral forums in Montevideo, Dakar, Paris and Manila, to name but a few.

4. At the same time, I have reached out to other international organizations, in particular those in the United Nations system. IOM's active participation in the Global Migration Group (GMG) is one important aspect of this. I am pleased that we are able to provide a platform at this Council for the membership to interact with the GMG, and I am very grateful that the current GMG Chair, UNCTAD Secretary General Supachai, has kindly agreed to lead that panel discussion. Engagement with our humanitarian partners in the IASC, and as an integral part of the cluster approach, is another key element for us. I look forward to attending my first IASC meeting with my fellow agency heads in New York in two weeks, where I will underscore our commitment. At the country level, IOM is now almost universally welcomed as a participant in UN country teams, in recognition that our work affects that of our UN colleagues just as their work affects ours. This is also in keeping with the UN's ongoing reform process and its efforts to "deliver as one". IOM has participated in nearly all the initial pilots, as was discussed at the SCPF, and we will continue to update you on the implications of that process for the Organization.

5. Other important partnerships continue to grow, including with members of the business community and with NGOs, as evidenced by the admission of the new observers earlier today. I welcome this development as recognition of the importance of the field we work in, and of the value of collective efforts.

6. I have also opened essential communication lines with my staff, both at Headquarters and in the Field, through a first consultative meeting with the Heads of IOM's Regional Offices and Special Liaison Missions, town hall meetings of all Headquarters staff, and daily senior

management team meetings. These encounters have enabled me to obtain direct assessments of the situation on the ground and to gather, at first hand, staff appraisals of the strengths and weaknesses of the Organization. In addition, planning is under way for a series of staff meetings in the Field that will eventually cover all regions.

Taking the pulse of the Organization

7. On the basis of these early but substantial interactions with IOM stakeholders, I should like to share with you some personal observations and reflections, and invite you to respond to them in interactive discussion.

8. Allow me to touch briefly on some basic administrative issues. On personnel, budget and administrative matters, there is a need for a review and reform of structures and processes to sharpen IOM's administrative capacity, to consolidate the growth and expansion of the Organization and to set the course for the next five to ten years in light of the Strategy adopted by Member States. I have announced an external review of organizational structures. I have also foreshadowed the conduct of a comprehensive staff satisfaction survey. My intention is to consolidate and present the outcomes of these exercises to Member States at the Spring 2009 sessions of IOM governing bodies.

9. My attention has been drawn to the fact that some Member States experience difficulties in settling their assessed contributions. In order to reach out and assist them, a flexible repayment plan is being proposed that will simplify and encourage the settlement of dues. This will allow those Member States to become eligible for projects funded from the 1035 Facility (Line 2).

10. Acceptance of the constitutional amendments remains an important issue for the Organization, as these amendments aim at strengthening the structure and streamlining the decision-making process of IOM. I invite those States that have not yet ratified the amendments to do so as soon as possible.

11. From a broader perspective, I am pleased to observe that IOM is an organization ably represented by more than 6,000 competent and committed staff in more than 400 locations, engaged in the delivery of an extensive range of service-oriented programmes and projects. IOM is today a truly international organization, with a membership from all regions of the world, and encompassing a wide diversity of perspectives on migration.

12. IOM is also an organization that has grown considerably over the last decade. Whether measured by growth in membership, expenditure, number of projects, number of offices or number of staff, the increase has been very significant. This growth is an eloquent testimony to the efforts of my predecessors. It is also a consequence of growing awareness, in recent years, of migration as international issue. It is perhaps, above all, a reflection of IOM's Member States' desire to have a truly representative organization.

13. IOM is characterized by its speed and efficiency of service, an entrepreneurial, cost-effective mode of operation, light and adaptable office structures, and a strong global presence. IOM's administrative structure is highly decentralized and field-oriented. The vast majority of its services are provided through specific-purpose time-and-budget-limited projects. However, growth in a rapidly changing policy environment has produced its own set of challenges and dilemmas. To point to but a few of the issues that have rather insistently been drawn to my attention: the core administrative structure is no longer adequate to deal with the exceptionally

strong growth of the Organization – it needs to be strengthened; the relationship of that core structure to the Strategy, carefully articulated and adopted by the membership in 2007, is yet to be mapped out; and the multiplicity of activity sectors, the range of project types and the intensity of daily operations make it a real challenge to ensure organizational coherence and provide adequate support for both staff and working partners.

14. The clear impression I have gathered from Member States is that they are deeply conscious of the place and importance of migration in our world today. They realize that migratory processes are evolving rapidly, and they expect IOM be an even more effective partner than before in the search for and delivery of services and advice to meet their specific needs.

15. At the same time I have a distinct sense that my IOM colleagues, whether at Headquarters or in the Field, are seriously preoccupied with questions of their own pertaining to job security, career development, and fairness and transparency of decision-making.

16. A quick look back provides strong evidence that IOM has had the ability and resilience to adapt to its Member States' changing perspectives on migration and, it follows, their changing policy and programme requirements.

17. In the 50s and 60s the focus (for what was then the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration) was sharply on preparing, transporting and following up large numbers of people left displaced without economic opportunities at the end of the Second World War in Europe, to destinations in New World countries. In the 70s and 80s IOM was again ready and prepared to work, in partnership with UNHCR and other international organizations, on vast programmes of resettlement for refugees and other persons of humanitarian concern, notably from South-East Asia and Central America.

18. The last two decades have been a time of considerable growth, experimentation and diversification, as lines of activity as varied as emergency operations, labour facilitation and movement, voluntary assisted return and reintegration, counter-trafficking, technical cooperation, migration and development, migration and health, policy consultation, advice and research, and international migration law were established or further developed. They have been times of exploration, questioning and experimentation, much of which was intended to identify the appropriate social and economic places for human mobility particularly in times of fluctuating economic conditions.

The road ahead

19. This Council provides us, the IOM community, with the right time and place to survey what lies ahead.

20. We have the opportunity to reflect on the meaning that should be assigned to the term “migration” in the light of current and emerging needs and expectations. The intention here is not to conduct a normative exercise. This would hardly be advisable, given both the diversity of membership and the propensity of the concept to morph in response to changing social, economic and political circumstances. This session is instead an occasion for us to identify the issues, interests, challenges and concerns that are uppermost in our minds as we work towards ensuring that migration is beneficial to all. And, in parallel, we can reflect on the institution IOM ought to be, in terms of its structure, roles and functions in order to address these matters effectively.

21. But while we apply our collective intellect and imagination to these tasks, we cannot afford to ignore the “elephant in the room”. As the global financial crisis has unfolded over the last few months, several questions of direct interest to migration policymakers and programme managers have repeatedly been asked:

- What will be the impact of the global economic downturn on migration?
- Will it put the jobs of migrant workers under threat?
- Will it affect their earning capacity?
- Will it lead to a significant decrease in remittances?
- How will it affect countries of origin: communities, families?

22. We should, of course, acknowledge that a large degree of caution should accompany any attempt to identify the possible migratory consequences of the financial crisis. For one thing, it is still unfolding and prospects are uncertain. For another, as usual only limited data is available and measuring instruments are blunt. Some effects may originate from other developments pre-dating the crisis.

23. It is, nonetheless, hard to disagree with those observers who predict a decrease in migration opportunities. Some policy decisions in that direction have already been taken, others are under consideration. Distributional effects may be uneven. Sectors such as construction, agriculture and tourism may be significantly affected. On the other hand, demand for services in the health-care sector, or for the aged, may not show much variation.

24. In light of latest available figures, after several years of strong growth, remittance flows to developing countries began to slow down in the third quarter of 2008 and will most likely remain flat for the fourth quarter. Officially recorded remittance flows to developing countries are projected to reach a total of USD 283 billion in 2008, up from USD 265 in 2007. But in real terms, remittances are expected to fall from 2 per cent of global GDP in 2007 to 1.8 per cent in 2008. Given, however, the tendency for remittances to behave counter cyclically in times of economic crises or recessions at the national level, remittances are expected to remain resilient relative to many other categories of resource flows to developing countries, and their decline may well be smaller than that of private or official capital flows. World Bank estimates provide a relatively large bracket of possible decrease, ranging between 0.9 per cent and 6 per cent, but it is in any case likely that the economies of many recipient countries will be significantly affected.

25. Given the current economic climate, there is a risk that migrants will be singled out and stigmatized. We need to make a concerted effort to prevent this and to ensure that public perceptions of migrants are fair and balanced. We need, also, to continue public education on the contribution of migrants to economic, social and cultural life and to re-emphasize respect for the human rights of migrants as a strategic objective and key commitment of the Organization. IOM Member States last year confirmed the need to enhance the effective respect for the human rights of migrants as a strategic objective of the Organization. This year we have seen considerable emphasis by States on the importance of respect for the human rights of migrants, as reported by our Field Offices as a key priority of host governments, and as highlighted at meetings among States at the regional level and most recently at the GFMD. The Organization sees this as a positive development in maximizing the benefits of migration for all parties involved.

26. IOM will monitor developments, analyse the trends as they emerge and keep Member States informed. IOM's media relations and public information activities will also continue to inform public debate and clarify perceptions.

27. While we are focusing on observations that are of specific and immediate interest however, there are some wider observations that must not be allowed to escape notice. They are conclusions that are very much consistent with the outlook of the World Migration Report 2008 which will be presented to you shortly. First, the financial crisis is a reminder of the interconnectedness and the interdependence of modern societies. It tells us that isolated national efforts are unlikely to lead to effective and sustainable solutions when we have to address complex international issues. And we should take the cue from current circumstances that migration is very much part of the fabric of the global economy.

28. As the international community works at rebuilding the economic system, there may be an unprecedented opportunity to work out also how migration can best contribute to it. Whether by design or not, the many processes of globalization – such as those adopted by the international community to facilitate the movement of capital, goods and services – have created a context in which human mobility seeks to assert itself as never before. The patterns of mobility are more diverse and more interrelated than they have been in the past; and at the heart of these patterns – whether they cover short-term or long-term movements, whether unidirectional or circular, whether they are internal or international, whether they are regular or irregular – are significant economic interests. Chief among these interests are employment-related objectives.

29. For the longer term, with or without financial crises, the crucial challenge facing the international community and, more specifically IOM's membership, is to ensure that the world is better equipped to manage that component of globalization that consists of human mobility. I would suggest that what IOM needs to offer today is a mobilization of effort altogether different from that which resulted in the migration programmes at the end of the Second World War, or the resettlement and integration programmes of the 70s and 80s, which builds on the lessons learnt in recent years, to help its Member States manage the many different forms of mobility that result from global economic, social and cultural interactions.

30. The concept of management is not to be understood here in a narrow sense, as implying control or restriction, but referring instead to effective governance of the various forms of mobility, in a comprehensive manner and in a long-term perspective. Without the necessary foundations – comprehensive and coherent policies, fair and properly functioning legal and administrative structures, well-trained personnel – governments will remain ill-equipped to harness the potential benefits of migration. Helping governments develop essential capacity to manage the movement of people into and out of their territories – for work, study, family unification, relief from harm – is and will remain a principal task for IOM.

Improving institutional efficiency and effectiveness

31. To meet this and other key challenges, I would suggest that IOM needs to adhere to three principles of action:

- **Member State ownership** - with all Member States able to contribute to strategic thinking and planning and engaged in open and transparent communication.

- **Collaborative partnerships** – given the complexity of migration, its many economic, social and cultural facets and its strong linkages to other policy domains, IOM cannot fully address its mission without building strong working partnerships with other stakeholders, including first and foremost Member States, but equally other international organizations, NGOs and the private sector. Our purpose must always be to have collaborative, not competitive relations. IOM is mandated by its Member States to address migration in its multiple facets. At the same time we recognize the valuable expertise of other agencies and entities on various aspects of migration. We welcome their involvement.
 - **Staff professionalism** – with the Organization as a whole enjoying a culture of professional growth and development, and respect and dignity being extended to all officers.
32. In the light of these principles, my vision for IOM is that of an organization that:
- safeguards its comparative advantage in terms of its operational ethos, its speed of response, its efficiency of effort and its effectiveness of action;
 - maintains and further develops its cutting-edge activities, especially in the fields of migration and development, labour migration, including circular migration, counter-trafficking, and emergency response and capacity-building;
 - continues to play an important role in supporting Regional Consultative Processes and GFMD, in helping to further develop their agendas and in encouraging them to exchange knowledge and experience;
 - engages cooperatively with partners in emerging or expanding fields such as Migration and Trade, Migration and the Environment and Migration and Health; and,
 - enhances its policy services to its membership, especially through the creation of spaces for policy dialogues, and through the further development of expertise in data collection, in analysis and research, and in the identification of best practices.
33. I am confident that, with your help, IOM will develop a clearer, stronger strategic focus for its activities, while continuing to uphold its record of service to its stakeholders.