

IOM 105th Council – General Debate

STATEMENT OF THE DELEGATION OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY

Mr. Chairperson,

Let me first of all congratulate you to your new function as chair of this Council.

Chairperson, Director General, Excellencies, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Introduction

Germany aligns herself with the statement given on behalf of the European Union.

At the outset, allow me to congratulate Director General Swing for his leadership and dynamism at the head of an organization which is recognized as the leading global migration agency. Its network is amazing and unique at the same time: An organisation with 156, since today 157 Members and 470 field offices represents a driving force of its own kind in the migration debate. IOM is the key player in international migration governance – and it is Germany's key partner in this endeavour. We warmly welcome the Independent State of Samoa as a new member to the IOM Council. A new member is not only joy but also confirmation for our joint engagement with IOM at the center.

Annual Consultations

This month, on 3rd November, IOM and Germany had the pleasure to celebrate the 60th anniversary of their long-standing relationship. It was a memorable and exciting moment for my government, represented by the German Minister of the Interior de Maizière, to host this celebration in Berlin in the presence of Director General Swing and his delegation from Geneva and the Berlin IOM office.

On this occasion, the first High Level Consultation took place between IOM and the German Federal Government. From now on, these consultations are to be held annually. They reflect the prominent role of

IOM in all migration matters and the increasing involvement of IOM in international migration policy issues.

Migration challenges today

Mr. Chairperson, migration is a central challenge of this century. Possible responses and solutions to problems have to be linked to virtually all major policy areas, in particular human rights, humanitarian relief, health, education, business, labor, environment and development aid, as well as sustainable social and professional re-integration. They all feed into a global strategy which seeks to enhance the rights and living conditions of migrants.

The events of 2014 have underlined the fact that migration is a key challenge, a game changer, of our time: It is a factor that more and more entrenches our societies and even our own lives. It makes us focus on the evolving protection needs, in the areas of human rights, health, sexual and gender-based violence, education, labour, natural disasters, recovery and development.

In the absence of political solutions to situations causing conflict and crisis, members of the IOM Council have an obligation to look for solutions of a humanitarian character for those harmed by crisis. As long as return, due to the circumstances on the ground, is no option, we need to look into resettlement of migrants and other forms of humanitarian admission, as well as better local integration. This relates to all national and regional crises we know about, but particularly to the crisis in Syria and, due to the refugees, that in the neighbouring countries as well.

I take this opportunity to appeal to all host countries - in the region, but even more those beyond the region - to cope with the situation, to evaluate the risk and the cost of both helping and not helping, and consequently to open their borders to Syrian refugees and give them shelter as long as they need it.

In a few days, on 9 December, UNHCR will call on Geneva delegations to pledge generously for the resettlement of Syrian refugees. On 18 December, the launch of OCHA's and UNHCR's campaigns in support of Syrian refugees will take place in Berlin, as a follow-up to the Berlin Refugees Conference. My government counts on all partners in this room to do everything to mitigate the dire situation of those refugees.

Migration governance

Mr. Chairperson, to shape international migration governance, IOM needs a multiplicity of partners – as well as best possible embeddedness in the international community. In this regard the relationship between IOM and the United Nations is an important unsolved issue which we, the Member States, should discuss and resolve in the very near future.

Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration

Let me briefly touch again on our bilateral cooperation with IOM: Return policy is an effective and tested tool of migration policy, especially pertinent in the case of Germany, where we saw a 60% increase in the number of asylum seekers in the last twelve months. For all those not in need of protection, voluntary return always takes priority over forced return. Over more than 30 years, Germany – in cooperation with IOM - has provided support to more than 520,000 persons returning to their countries of origin via programs which cover travel expenses and include a transport allowance and start-up aid.

Sustainable economic and social reintegration of returnees in their countries of origin and, increasingly, also in the neighboring countries, is an increasingly important element of return policy. Assisting returnees to become established locally in economic and social terms is intended to help them make a new start at home, such as in the case of the highly valued IOM projects in Iraqi Kurdistan funded by Germany.

Mr. Chairperson,

In conclusion, let me reiterate: We are ready to continue our constructive cooperation on international migration issues and see ample potential for extending it in the years to come. I can assure you that Germany is a dedicated supporter of IOM's work and, given the rising levels of migration, we see our relationship as a steadily evolving partnership.

Thank you!