



I T A L Y

Statement by H.E. Maurizio Enrico SERRA,
Ambassador and Permanent Representative,
at the 105th Session of IOM Council
(Geneva, 25-28 November 2014)

Mr. Chairperson, Director-General, Deputy Director-General,
distinguished Delegates,

Italy aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

At the outset, let me express to Ambassador Chavez Basagoitia our sincere appreciation for his chairmanship during the past year and welcome Ambassador Eddico as new Council Chair. You can count on Italy's support. A warm welcome also to Samoa as a new Member and to the fourteen new observers to the IOM family.

As you are aware, in recent months Italy has been facing an escalating humanitarian crisis in the Mediterranean that has seen more than 153,000 people arriving to our shores this year, almost five times last year's figure. The majority was rescued by the Italian Navy, through the Mare Nostrum operation of Search and Rescue. Up to 50% of these people are refugees and asylum-seekers and a

significant proportion are unaccompanied children. The majority is of Syrian and Eritrean nationality.

Moreover, through the Mare Nostrum operation more than 700 traffickers have so far been arrested, and the Italian Navy, thanks to sophisticated investigation techniques, such as a sub-marine and several drones, was able to intercept eight ships in the process of releasing on the sea smaller boats full of migrants.

We are therefore proud of the high humanitarian profile of Mare Nostrum, which is matched with equally remarkable counter-trafficking results. Through Mare Nostrum, Italy was able to significantly reduce the many illegal activities which, otherwise, would have been freely carried out in the central Mediterranean Sea.

Mare Nostrum is the widest humanitarian operation ever conducted by Italy. Still, the active search and rescue at sea that we have pursued with determination and through the wide deployment of means and resources was regrettably not enough to save everybody. More than 3,000 people have died this year in shipwrecks or in transit, a fourfold increase in comparison to 2013. And a single death makes all calculations of the many saved irrelevant.

The new Triton European operation is a step towards a deeper and long-awaited responsibility sharing amongst European countries and a signal of greater commitment from European counterparts. While Triton is starting its operations in these days, Mare Nostrum is still operating in the Mediterranean under the same principles.

Mr. Chairperson,

Italy strongly believes that life-saving operations are only part of the answer and that establishing a permanent Dialogue with the countries of origin and transit must be equally part of our common endeavour. With this in mind, Italy and the European Commission presented on 28 August 2014 in Khartoum, during a meeting organised by the African Union, IOM and UNHCR, a joint initiative called the Horn of Africa Migration Route Initiative or the “Khartoum Process”. The Khartoum Process should establish a dialogue on migration with the countries of the Horn and Eastern Africa, as well as the main Mediterranean transit countries, thus gathering countries of origin, transit and destination along the migratory route from the Horn of Africa to Europe. In just two days from now, next Friday, the Khartoum Process will be officially launched in Rome.

We consider the Khartoum Process a building block of a longer term perspective on these issues that Italy is actively pursuing also during the current semester of Presidency of the European Union.

We commend IOM for the high quality of the projects implemented in partnerships with our national authorities in 2014. In this context, I wish to express our thanks to IOM for the assistance through the Praesidium project. Praesidium is a very interesting “joint venture” that brings together the specific expertise of UNHCR and IOM and also the civil society, namely Save the Children and the Italian Red Cross, to help Italian national and local authorities at Lampedusa and other places in Sicily and Southern Italy, in the first moments of receiving and identifying arriving migrants and asylum seekers.

We deeply appreciate IOM's operational expertise, efficiency, effectiveness. IOM has proven with concrete facts to be the global leading Agency on migration. IOM will continue to be a strategic partner for Italy in the next future, both in the field and at the global level.

Thank you.