



SIERRA LEONE

INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION FOR MIGRATION 103RD COUNCIL MEETING

STATEMENT BY H.E AMBASSADOR YVETTE STEVENS

PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE UNITED NATIONS IN GENEVA

Delivered on 27th November, 2013

Mr. Chairperson,

Honourable Ministers,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

My Delegation is pleased to participate in the 103rd Session of the IOM Council. On behalf of my Delegation and indeed my government, allow me to start by congratulating my colleague Amb. Luis Enrique Chávez for being elected to the Chairmanship of the IOM Council. I also wish to congratulate the other members of the bureau composed of the first Vice Chair (Amb. Minelik Alemu Getahun of Ethiopia), the second Vice Chair (Amb. Bertrand de Crombrugghe of Belgium) and the Rapporteur (Counsellor Kate Omaly of Australia). We pay tribute to the outgoing bureau led by the visionary Amb. Abdul Hannan for their contribution in steering the growth of IOM in membership and outreach.

My Delegation notes with satisfaction the achievements of IOM as outlined in the Director General's report. We applaud the professionalism and commitment of staff under the

guidance of Mr. William Lacy Swing and his Deputy Amb. Laura Thompson for your diligent efforts which have led to recognition of IOM as **THE** leading international organisation on migration. I would particularly like to commend IOM's prominent role leading up to and during the October High-level Dialogue as well as its proactivity in engaging stakeholders to identify mechanisms of implementing the Dialogue outcomes. My Delegation further recognises the successes registered at the Diaspora Ministerial Conference and supports the idea of making the event more regular to keep the diaspora engaged in issues of development in their host and parent countries. We also pay tribute to IOM's vision in centrally placing the challenges of migrants in the United Nations post-2015 development agenda. In recognition of the organisation's outstanding achievements, capacity and potential, I call upon this august body to lobby and advocate for IOM to assume more and regular leadership in the Global Migration Group to coordinate global migration.

My Delegation takes note of the challenges faced by the organisation in implementing its agenda. We regret the loss of life and property in the Kabul incident in May this year. We appreciate that with unprecedented global emergencies occasioned by climate change, conflict and poverty, IOM will continue to face pressure on its budgetary demands. We therefore pledge the support of Sierra Leone to the recommendations made by the Budget Working Group under the able Chairmanship of Amb. Bertrand de Crombrughe.

Mr. Chairperson,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

The 103rd IOM Session is taking place at a time the memories of those who perished off the coast of Lampedusa, Sicily, Malta in addition to the 30 in Bahamas yesterday are still fresh in our minds. These are but just a few known incidents because the media got wind of it. Unfortunately, there are many more numbers will never be known that have silently perished on land and at sea in search of a better life. This unending carnage at sea cannot be ignored. The time is ripe to advance the agenda for upholding the human dignity and well-being of migrants through supporting international policy dialogue on migration among all stakeholders. Addressing population dynamics and advancing human rights are central to human-centred development. Considering that migration was and will continue to be inevitable and relevant, it is an international phenomenon that requires logical and consistent global governance which has been accorded to similar trans-boundary policy areas. The existence of the Global Migration Group is no substitute for a UN migration

organization. Immigration policies are different across nations and yet countries of origin of migrants, transit and destination are diverse. In the presence of the traditional and conservative thinking on human mobility and in the face of the global economic crisis, without a strong call for uniformity in migration policies, some countries will continue to develop and implement policies that embed anti-migrant sentiments. Migrants have been anxiously waiting for concluding the on-going debate on migration governance and take bold and implementable decisions on required establishment of international institutions and forging cooperation to meet the challenges of international migration.

Mr. Chairperson,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Allow me to divulge to the national scene for a moment. More than ever before has the role of migrants in development been taken so seriously. It is estimated that over 30 million people are African migrants and more than one third of Africa's highly qualified human resources are in the Diaspora including Sierra Leoneans. The Government of Sierra Leone under the dynamic leadership of H.E Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma is determined to reduce the statistics of migrants originating from the country. Pillar 3 of the Agenda for Prosperity is concerned with human development and will *inter alia* implement a robust and dynamic population policy to reduce migration to cities. At its core is addressing the plight of unemployed youth.

My government is also continuing to build an enabling environment in which to engage with the Diaspora. This will create a community of support for national development priorities and involve the diaspora more in rebuilding the nation to overcome the effects of the unfortunate decade of conflict (1991-2002). To this end, Sierra Leone is continuing to follow the road towards economic transformation through formulating comprehensive policies and reviewing existing ones, developing incentive mechanisms, accelerating structural reforms and encouraging investments among other strategies. Employment creation especially for the youth is a priority. Increasing school enrolment and improving literacy rates are on track.

Further, on engagement with the Sierra Leone migrants, the government is in the process of designing a legal policy framework detailing the rights and responsibilities of the diaspora. It is anticipated that this framework will be embraced as a tool for building trust

among various stakeholders and hence leverage the diaspora resources to contribute towards rebuilding Sierra Leone into a middle income country. This will take the form of capacity building schemes and remittance management and accountability. With the strong political will that exists in my government, we will continue to tap on the excellent collaborative efforts that exist between Sierra Leone and IOM to build the capacity of the Office of Diaspora in the Ministry of Political and Public Affairs to realise successful implementation of this noble idea. We recognise IOM's expertise and long experience in linking with Diasporas including knowledge and skills transfer programmes, temporary and virtual returns as well as remittance facilitation.

Mr. Chairperson,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

My Delegation is gratified and encouraged by the estimated budget of almost USD 3.8million to cover IOM's operations for 2014 in Sierra Leone. Supplementing the on-going interventions which we deeply cherish, the planned strategies, projects and programmes will go a long way to complement the development agenda envisioned by my government. In 2009, IOM was instrumental in developing our national migration profile. Possession of accurate data and statistics is seen as a prerequisite for developing a formidable national diaspora engagement strategy. We look forward to IOM's support in updating this profile. Current data will go a long way in enhancing sound planning by relevant institutions in the country including the Sierra Leone Investment and Export Promotion Agency.

There are also noble intentions by IOM to implement preventive and responsive measures to the humanitarian needs of several deserving Sierra Leones. Regarding migration health, IOM will support the Ministry of Health to conduct a comprehensive situational assessment of health-related challenges and service gaps among mobile groups. In collaboration with the government, IOM will implement an initiative on border and management control with the objective of modernising national migration systems and procedures in line with acceptable international requirements, standards and practices.

Sierra Leone is still grappling with the effects of the decade long conflict. One such effect is the substantial number of street children that are vulnerable to exploitation including trafficking. The Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children Affairs in collaboration with the Freetown City Council are implementing special measures to prevent and address

the problems faced by the victims of trafficking. My Delegation commends IOM's intentions to complement these efforts by building national capacity in prevention and handling of rescued victims of human trafficking. Moreover, IOM's initiatives will offer protection and reintegration support to victims of trafficking and stranded migrants.

Mr. Chairperson,

Ladies and Gentlemen

The negative effects of brain drain cannot be overemphasized. During the conflict period, Sierra Leone lost some of its finest professional through migration. There is urgent need, therefore, to reverse the trend and mobilise Sierra Leoneans Diaspora for national development. My Delegation lauds the concerted efforts by IOM and the Netherlands in implementing the project for the temporary return of qualified Sierra Leonean nationals. We are encouraged by IOM's intentions to expand the programme targeting all sectors, including the health sector to stimulate further national social and economic development. Implementation of this programme will benefit the Office of Diaspora Affairs in augmenting its capacity on circular migration, diaspora mobilization as well as knowledge and skills transfer.

In conclusion, in pursuing our common goal and shared interests in realizing the Sierra Leone dream, my Delegation wishes to reaffirm the commitment of our government offering all the necessary support including providing an enabling environment for the successful implementation of IOM's programmes. We would like to wish IOM success in its operations under the Director General's banner of continuity, coherence and change to influence further global migration policy development and implementation.

I thank you all and wish you a successful meeting.