

*Check against delivery*

**COUNCIL OF THE  
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Statement by H.E. Ms. Päivi Kairamo  
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Thank you Chair,

Mr. Chairperson, Mr. Director General, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I would like to start by commending the Director General for his leadership and commitment in working with migration issues. IOM with its long history of migration related activities has a key role in moving the migration agenda forward. Finland greatly appreciates the work of the Director General and the whole IOM staff to address today's complex migration challenges.

As Director General has said, the year 2015 is the year of the migrant. Every seventh person in the world is a migrant - roughly one billion people - and billions more are impacted by migration daily. This year, as stated many times during this meeting, also Europe has faced migration and refugee crises in its own continent. Considerable efforts have been devoted to address this crisis with the primary goal to prevent unsafe journeys and to save lives as well as to ensure protection to those in need.

The current situation is a major change also for Finland. The amount of asylum seekers has increased dramatically comparing to previous years. Currently we estimate that the total number of asylum seekers will be 35 000 this year – it is ten times more than last year. The authorities have already taken many steps to intensify and to ensure the smooth processing of the asylum applications. Several new reception centers have been established around Finland, and there are plans for establishing many more in the near future. A well-functioning registration center for asylum seekers has been set up in Tornio at the Swedish border in the Northern Finland. The Finnish concept of the registration center represents very much the needs and aims of the so called hotspots.

Finland emphasizes the need for international and coordinated responses involving different sectors to tackle the refugee and migration situation in Europe. Finland fully supports the outcomes of the High-Level Conference on the Eastern Mediterranean and Western Balkans route and of the Valletta Summit. It is of paramount importance that the follow-up of these two recent meetings is carried out efficiently and in full and strong ownership by the Parties to them.

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Responding to forced migration requires a comprehensive approach, and both short-term and long-term activities. In addition to international dialogue, also humanitarian assistance, mediation, crisis management and trade policy should be used to address the situation. Development cooperation contributes to create better living conditions and to avoid situations where migration is a necessity, not a choice. In our foreign policy, Finland emphasizes the human rights-based approach to development cooperation and migration-related policies.

In the long term, it is essential to identify, analyze and address the drivers of irregular and forced migration. This needs to be done in partnership between the countries of origin and transit and the international community. To achieve this objective, we should take full advantage of already existing institutional instruments and dialogue processes.

The right and access to health is a basic human right and migrants are often in very vulnerable situations in this respect. Finland supports the project implemented by IOM with the aim to improve health and well-being among migrants in transit in Morocco, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia and Yemen. The target group of the project is migrants in vulnerable situations such as victims of trafficking, single mothers and unaccompanied migrant children.

Finland also supports IOM's work to strengthen the health sector in Somalia by developing its human resources capacities with the assistance of Somali Diaspora Health Professionals. They support the public sector health institutions in Somaliland and Puntland to provide quality healthcare services. We would like to thank the IOM for the excellent cooperation in implementing these projects.

Before concluding, I would like to commend the IOM for updating its policy on gender equality issues by developing the new Gender Equality Policy. We think that it is of utmost importance to address these issues both in programming and in organizational culture. We look forward to the implementation of the new policy.

Thank you chair