

Thank you Chair,

First of all, allow me to congratulate you and the new bureau members on your election, as well as express our delight in welcoming the new member-states and observers to the IOM family. We also congratulate Ghana on their appointment to the position of external auditor.

We wish to start by thanking the Director General for his personal leadership, his practical spirit and his philosophical nuances that remind us that we should not only limit ourselves to migration management but to reflect, in a more profound manner, that the successful managing<sup>of</sup> this crisis constitutes, above all, a test for our humanitarian values.

In this context, we will never stop stressing that saving lives was, is and will remain the key humanitarian priority for us. Greece did and continues to do its utmost to rescue people fleeing from war, terror, poverty and despair while they struggle in their flimsy boats in the Aegean Sea. The Hellenic coast guard has put tremendous efforts to save so far more than 90.000 lives in over 2.500 incidents of search and rescue in the Aegean since the start of the year. These people in need are received in a humane way in our frontline islands, with the generous mobilization also of the local population and the civil society in general. The smaller islands have been particularly affected with refugee arrivals outnumbering the local population. To give a better sense of the dimensions of the crisis suffice to say that between January and September of 2015, 700,000 refugees and migrants arrived in Greece through the Aegean. All the same, Greece is rapidly improving reception

facilities and identification procedures as well as setting up hotspots to facilitate relocation in cooperation with the European Commission. In today's high level panel the Secretary General of the Greek Ministry of Public Health Mr Ioannis Baskozos presented a detailed account of the concrete measures adopted by Greece in providing health care for migrants and refugees. Meanwhile, it should be remembered that Greece and the Greek people, at this crucial juncture, are faced with multiple challenges arising from an unprecedented economic and financial crisis.

Furthermore, we firmly believe in further promoting resettlement from third countries as a durable solution which can contribute to preventing loss of a countless number of lives and deal a decisive blow to criminal trafficking and smuggling networks. In these areas, we recognize the valuable contribution and expertise of IOM worldwide and would like to underline that the arrests of smugglers and traffickers in Greece have increased by 20%, while in some frontline islands these arrests have increased by 115% since the beginning of the year.

We also deeply appreciate the multifaceted work of the IOM in Greece. In this regard, the overall support of IOM in the area of assisted voluntary return has made possible the dignified and safe repatriation of more than 3000 people since the beginning of 2015. We share the analysis contained in your migration governance framework document that effective returns 'policies' constitute a significant part of a safe, orderly and dignified management of migration. We additionally believe that implementation of readmission agreements is equally crucial in this respect.

In the same vein, we would like to make the link with the need to keep strengthening cooperation and coordination between countries of origin, transit and destination. Equally important is the need to build strong partnerships in managing migration. The recent Eastern Mediterranean and Western Balkans conference as well as the Valetta summit are concrete examples of efforts to build a common understanding. In particular in the Valetta summit, Africa emerged as a major potential partner of the EU, in the interconnected framework of development cooperation and the new EU policies on migration.

Since we mentioned development, of course we welcome the inclusion of migration in the 2030 Development Agenda, and look forward to the IOM's participation in the SDG's follow up. We also wish to commend the IOM for the platform on migrant health and the organization of the relevant panel, where we tried to contribute actively. We welcome the creation of a climate change division within the IOM, since we share the view that by now we need to increase our level of preparedness vis-a-vis an important migration trend <sup>as soon as possible. We</sup> ~~and~~ also applaud the work of the Nansen Initiative forum in this respect. Furthermore, we wish to acknowledge the tireless work of the IOM in highlighting the interlinkages between migration, labor mobility and demographics, as well as its pioneering work in data collection.

Mr Director General,

In conclusion, I would like to say that, in view of the current difficulties, the world's expectations from a robust migration agency become significantly higher than before, but we are confident that yourself together with your dedicated team will rise to these challenges, and that the principles of humanism, solidarity

**and respect for migrants rights will prevail against racism, xenophobia and the creation of scapegoats.**