



**I T A L Y**

**Statement by H.E. Maurizio Enrico SERRA,  
Ambassador and Permanent Representative,  
at the 107<sup>th</sup> Session of IOM Council  
(Geneva, 5-8 December 2016)**

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Chair, 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 Mr Geert Muyelle of Belgium our thanks for his efforts and welcome Ambassador Quinn of Australia as the new Council Chair. A warm welcome goes to the Kingdom of Tonga as new Member State as well as to the eighteen new observers that have joined the IOM family.

2016 has been, to quote Director-General Swing, “another year of migration”. Historic levels of displacement, thousands of deaths in transit and a huge asylum crisis have combined with rising xenophobia, growing concerns about migration and security, trafficking of human beings and inadequate policy-making. Conflicts, persecutions and human rights violations have driven people from their homes in search of safety but also poverty, climate change and lack of opportunities are prompting many to leave their countries and look for new lives elsewhere.

During 2016, over 170,000 people have arrived to the Italian shores, while 4.690 persons have lost their life trying to cross the Mediterranean Sea. According to the humanitarian imperative of saving lives, Italy continues to contribute in Rescue at Sea activities and in fighting against the trafficking of human beings, also in the framework of Operation EUNAVFOR – Sophia and EU coordination mechanisms. At the same, Italy has been recording during the last years a sharp and continuous increase in requests for asylum or other forms of protection, amounting to 103.713 on November 2016, about 40% more than the previous year.

Chair, Italy could not overstate the importance of IOM's cooperation: the presence of IOM in reception centres in Italy is extremely appreciated as it allows our national authorities to better cope with the reception of and assistance to migrants, especially in the current circumstances.

Rescue at sea and border control is a key part of our response to the challenges of migration but only a strong and comprehensive response can lead us of this crisis. We need to address the political and economic root causes of migration, to strengthen partnerships among countries of origin, transit and destination and to find collective, sustainable solutions: every actor in the international community should step up its commitments to tackle large movements of people based on the principle of respect of human dignity and safety.

For these reasons, we welcome as important steps in the right direction the formal integration of IOM in the United Nations, the General Assembly Summit on Large Movement of Migrants and Refugees and the developing of the Global Compact on Migration. On the modalities of the State-led process for the adoption of the Compact, formal intergovernmental negotiations should be preceded by a broad phase of comprehensive consultations, inclusive of all the

relevant stakeholders and supported by strong policy and technical expertise, starting with the integration of the Geneva-based migration expertise. IOM is the Organization with a leading role on migration. It is of the utmost importance that IOM can make substantive contributions to the process of elaboration of the Global Compact and we strongly advocate for its leading role being fully taken into account since the beginning of the preparatory phase. Also, Italy would be in favor of making the IOM Director General the Secretary General of the Conference.

At the same time, it is essential that IOM remain an efficient and operational Agency and continue to assist governments in the development and implementation of migration policy, legislation and management, to prevent illegal migration, facilitate regular migration and implement specific programmes such as assisted voluntary return and reintegration and counter-trafficking.