

IOM Council 107th Session

5-8 December 2016

GENERAL DEBATE

Statement of Latvia

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson! Latvia would like to congratulate you Ambassador Quinn as well as other Bureau Members with the election.

Latvia warmly welcomes the new Member State Kingdom of Tonga as well as a number of observers with joining the International Organization for Migration.

Latvia aligns itself with the Statement of the European Union and its Member States and would like to add some remarks in a national capacity.

First of all, congratulations with the 65th anniversary! IOM Office is operating in Latvia since 1998, one year before Latvia joined the organization. Thus it celebrated its 18th birthday in April this year, marking a decent level of maturity.

The IOM Office in Latvia started with the necessary steps of assisting the alignment of the legislation of Latvia with that of the EU. Throughout these years, IOM has carried out over 2000 voluntary returns. It has provided valuable informative support to create a firm anti-trafficking policy. Integration program of immigrants has been carried out for five consecutive years. As of this year IOM Office in Latvia is successfully involved in relocation and resettlement of asylum seekers.

Mr. Chair,

Latvia takes its international commitments seriously. As of now, Latvia has relocated 140 persons from Greece and 8 from Italy, and resettled 6 persons in need of international protection from Turkey. This makes already 20% of all the persons Latvia had committed to relocate and resettle within two years.

The Ministry of Interior of Latvia has taken a decision to increase the overhead rate for voluntary returns carried out by IOM from 5% to 7%.

Latvia would like to fully acknowledge the tireless, flexible and smart contribution of the IOM staff all around the globe, very often in dangerous and exhaustive circumstances.

19 September was marked with the adoption of the historic New York Declaration. Elaboration of the Global Compact for Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration to be adopted in 2018 follows up to this umbrella document.

Latvia clearly supports the leading role of the IOM as regards substantive elaboration of the Global Compact on migration. IOM is now a UN Related Agency with a global mandate and longstanding expertise in both policy and operational aspects of migration. The process can only benefit from IOM's expertise.

We also believe that preparation of the Compact is not exceptional but rather routine exercise. As it will be based mostly on established platforms applying existing mechanisms, it should not create additional expenditures neither for the UN institutions involved nor their Member States. Latvia supports adoption of the Compact during the High Level segment of the UN General Assembly in 2018.

While elaborating the Compact we should attribute due attention to the situation of internally displaced persons bearing in mind that displacement has both its external and internal dimensions. The internal dimension is especially important in the context of the biggest humanitarian crisis Europe faces today, that of Ukraine. IDPs cause immense challenges also in another European state – Georgia. IDPs should remain clearly on the UN agenda as a humanitarian issue.

Thank you, Director General Mr. William Lacy Swing, for your personal dedication, vision and guidance. IOM has our firm support.