

IOM Council, 107th Session, 5 – 8 December 2016

Statement by Norway in the general debate

Delivered by Deputy Secretary General Ms. Aud Kolberg, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

Thank you chair,

Let me start by congratulating the Director General and all of your colleagues within the organization on the 65th anniversary of IOM. In many countries this is the age of retirement. For IOM, however, there is more work waiting than ever before.

With a record number of people on the move, migration has climbed to the top of many governments' agendas around the world. Migration is a global reality, and it goes right to the core of state sovereignty. We need to strike the right balance between respecting sovereignty and seeking common solutions. Migration cannot be managed by any one state alone.

Migration has always been a driver of human mobility, development and growth. But migration should be voluntary, not forced by circumstances. Forced migration puts lives at risk and undermines our capacity to manage migration.

With around 350 000 migrants and refugees having entered Europe by sea so far this year, the influx to Europe remains high, although significantly lower than last year. The number of fatalities, however, are higher than last year, with around 4 700 reported deaths.

Our first priority must therefore be to save lives and give assistance to vulnerable migrants. Norway tries to do both. IOM is one of our important humanitarian partners in, for instance, Libya and Turkey. As part of Operation Triton, the Norwegian government has provided

a ship that has saved almost 30 000 lives. In the Eagan Sea, another Norwegian ship has saved 4 000 lives.

Secondly, we must address the root causes that push people to leave while they would have chosen to stay under other circumstances. This includes poverty, poor education, conflict, lack of jobs and climate change, just to mention a few.

Thirdly, we must ensure that people who are not in need of international protection are able to return with dignity to their country of origin. The response to irregular migration from Western Africa to the Canary Islands has shown that a strict and efficient system of return can be very effective. That route has now lost its popularity and is hardly in use today.

Finally, we must tackle human smuggling. IOM is again a key partner. Norway supports projects to increase our knowledge of migration routes such as the m-Hub in Cairo and initiatives to stop smuggling from the Horn of Africa and Turkey.

Chair,

As we have heard from the Director General, growth is a key feature of IOM today. Growth in staff numbers, growth in project activity and growth in budgets. This reflects the member states' interest in IOM's services. It is an expression of confidence in IOM's work.

With increased activity and budgets follows increased responsibility. We underline the importance of transparency, the independence and quality of investigation, audit and evaluation, as well as full cooperation with member states on these issues.

As a growing organization, it also becomes increasingly important to set the priorities right. We therefore welcome further work on updating IOM's strategy in the time ahead.

Chair,

The agreement signed between IOM and the UN on September 19th this year is an important development in IOM's history. We fully

supported this and believe it will contribute to better international cooperation on migration.

We take this opportunity to remind you, Director General, that although IOM has become a related organization to the UN, we would like to underline the need of IOM's integrity, independence and operational flexibility to remain as strong as ever.

Chair,

We are witnessing an unprecedented flow of mixed migration: refugees and migrants moving between countries and continents. It is a important challenge to ensure their rights and safety along the routes, in transit countries and upon arrival in the countries of destination. The complexity and magnitude of today's movements call for new, comprehensive approaches and broad alliances. We must take necessary action. We must uphold our international obligations. And we must seek durable solutions.

The adoption in 2018 of a Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration will be an important step forward. As a member state, Norway welcomes IOM's expertise and leading role on the complex journey towards such a Compact, to reach better solutions for managing migration today and tomorrow.

Finally, we look forward to receiving, you, Director General, and your colleagues, in Oslo early next year for bilateral consultations on all these issues.

Thank you for your attention.
