

**BULGARIA**

**STATEMENT BY H.E. MS. DEYANA KOSTADINOVA**

**PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE UN OFFICE AND OTHER  
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN GENEVA**

**AT THE 108TH SESSION OF THE IOM COUNCIL**

**(28 November - 1 December 2017, Geneva)**

*Thank you, Madame Chair.*

Bulgaria aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union and its Member States and would like to present some views in its national capacity.

We **thank the Director General** for his comprehensive report which gave detailed and very useful information on the IOM activities and on his vision of the Organisation's future. The decision IOM to join the United Nations system has demonstrated the credibility of Member States in the Organisation's ability to be the leading agency on these issues. Ambassador Swing and Ambassador Thompson have contributed significantly to the trust Member States have in the IOM.

Madame Chair,

We note with concern that **the migratory and refugee flows continued to be a serious challenge for the international community**. The firm commitments we have all made in the New York Declaration were more than timely to address in systematic and effective manner the migration challenges. We express our satisfaction with the ongoing process leading to the development of the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. We should be aiming at a comprehensive and balanced approach that reflects all aspects of international migration in full respect for human rights. We are convinced that long-term and viable solutions can only be achieved through joint efforts and enhanced international cooperation.

Addressing the **root causes of migration** should be one of our starting points. The pull and push factors of this phenomenon are varied and at the same time interconnected which requires a holistic international response. This response should be able to address the whole spectrum of economic, environmental, social, political and security issues. The cooperation on development and crisis management must be brought closer together.

At the same time **the consequences of international migration** and especially the negative ones should be addressed in a more timely and systematic manner.

Preventing and combating irregular migration and migrant smuggling, eradicating human trafficking should remain among our key priorities as international community. The cross-border nature of these illegal activities demands enhanced international cooperation and exchange of information, with actions carried out both in the countries of origin, transit and destination. The partnership in the field of return and readmission is an essential prerequisite for a responsible and well-functioning regional and global migration management.

Madame Chair,

In January 2018 **Bulgaria takes over the Presidency of the Council of the European Union** and **one of the main priorities of our presidency will be Migration.**

The Bulgarian Presidency will keep the focus on the root causes of migration and on strengthening the measures for reducing incentives for irregular migration. We will continue the work on ensuring close cooperation and an open and pragmatic dialogue with key third countries of origin and transit. Bulgaria will work for more coordinated European measures in the field of return policy and for extensive use of tools such as readmission agreements. We will continue to monitor and support the efforts towards the normalization of the situation in the Central Mediterranean, and will remain vigilant for a possible reopening of other routes. Intensified work on external aspects should go hand in hand with strengthening the EU internal mechanisms as the reform of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS).

Madame Chair,

In conclusion, let me share with you some examples from my national perspective about our excellent cooperation with IOM. In 2017 IOM remained an important partner for us in view of the voluntary return of migrants to their countries of origin in a safe, humane and dignified manner. We are pleased to inform that since January this year IOM has supported 800 voluntary returns of migrants compared to 2016 and 2015 when 728 migrants in total were returned to their countries of origin under the IOM programmes. These figures demonstrate that the 2015 Agreement on Cooperation between the IOM and the Ministry of Interior of Bulgaria has put the collaboration on successful basis and contributes to an effective cooperation. Furthermore due to our excellent cooperation and mutual trust in October the IOM was provided with an office at the accommodation centre for migrants in Sofia and the IOM representative working in it has the opportunity to interact with the migrants on a regular basis.

I thank you Madame Chair.