

PHILIPPINES

General Debate

108th International Organization on Migration (IOM) Council
Salle XVII, Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland
28 November - 01 December 2017

Thank you Madam President.

Allow me to start with our congratulations to you on your election as President of the IOM Council, and to the other members of the IOM Bureau for their respective elections.

Let me also welcome the new members of the IOM, Cuba and Cook Islands and the new observer State, Kuwait as well as the several international organizations, including the UNFCCC as represented by our old friend and former Chief of Staff of IOM, Mr. Ovais Sarmad.

The Philippines also wishes to congratulate and express its sincerest appreciation to the IOM Administration, particularly to IOM Director General, Ambassador William "Bill" Swing.

There are so many reasons to congratulate the IOM Administration and DG Swing. As correctly pointed the out in the Director General's report, the IOM experienced phenomenal growth under his leadership.

We are now a 169 member intergovernmental organization. IOM is recognized as a leading organization on migration, with a very large footprint on the ground. Over 90% of IOM's 10,500 personnel are working in almost all countries and territories around the world, often in most difficult and dangerous circumstances.

Over the last several months, IOM has provided its invaluable technical support and expertise to member States and the UN, as we all prepared for the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration (GCM).

The Philippines is the home of IOM's Manila Administrative Center (MAC) where most of the back office work is done at economic cost, thereby reducing the burden on the organization. Our dear friend, Bruce Reed, used to head it.

Madam President, the Philippines welcome the assignment of a separate IOM Head of Mission for the Philippines. For us, this signals the deepening of the relationship of the IOM with my country, as manifested by various cooperation programs and activities, including those on migrants' health, ethical recruitment and decent work, trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling, and overall capacity building at the local and sub-national levels.

In addition, this signals to us the great trust reposed by the IOM on the capacity and willingness of the Philippines to take on leadership roles and share its best practices and experiences within our region, and indeed, with the rest of the world.

Madam President, we welcomed our tremendous partnership with the IOM as the Philippines co-led with the US the Migrants in Countries in Crisis (MICIC) initiative that produced the MICIC Guidelines to Protect Migrants in Countries Experiencing Crisis or Natural Disasters.

The MICIC Guidelines are being offered as a voluntary toolkit that may be used by States and all stakeholders in addressing the protection needs of migrants caught in countries experiencing crisis and natural disasters. Since the launch of the MICIC Guidelines last year, several capacity building activities has been held, most notably, the training done this year in Manila for Colombo Process consular officials from capitals, and in Lebanon for consular officials deployed abroad. With the continued assistance of the IOM, the capacity-building efforts for States and other stakeholders will be continued.

The Philippines has also partnered with IOM and at least two provinces of Canada in pilot testing the International Recruitment Integrity System (IRIS) initiative to advance decent work and fair recruitment principles, including the employer pays principle in labor recruitment and work contract models with decent work standards in place. We are hopeful that whatever lessons we are learning in the process could be shared with IOM members as another important tool in advancing the welfare and protecting the rights of migrant workers.

Madam President, my delegation also wishes to point out that IOM has established the Migration Emergency Funding Mechanism (MEFM) to address the gap in immediate funding to cover the cost of responding to humanitarian emergency situations adversely affecting migrants. The Philippines is fully supportive of the mechanisms and, despite its own resource constraints, has regularly contributed a modest amount to the Fund. With the IOM Director General's report that there are now 8 ongoing Level-3 humanitarian emergencies such as in Yemen, the importance of the Fund is increasing. It is in this regard that the Philippines calls upon all IOM Member States to contribute to the MEFM.

I would like to recall that the Philippines has been consistently and constructively engaged in the GCM process during the Thematic and Regional Consultations phase and in its own national and multi-stakeholders consultation.

We have also been active in the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) and its dedicated Working Group dealing with the GCM. We are part of the WG that helped prepare the GFMD Reflection that was submitted to the SRSG and the co-facilitators as GFMD's contribution to the GCM preparatory process.

We have worked closely with member countries of the Colombo Process, now under the leadership of Nepal, for our group's contribution to the GCM preparatory process. The Philippines, in particular, has finalized the report on the thematic working group on pre-departure orientation and submitted the same as a doable good practice to prepare migrants before they embark on their migration journey. The IOM has been with us in the Colombo Process as we began on our work related to the GCM. Thank you IOM.

At the national level, we have had our series of sectoral, national and multi-stakeholders consultations for the GCM. The results of these consultations were articulated in our various statements in the thematic and regional consultations. We thank IOM for supporting our national multi-stakeholders consultation.

Madam President, migration has been mainstreamed in the Philippines' development agenda. Our national and sub-national development plans reference migration. We see this as a good practice and a concrete and doable commitment to pursue the narrative that migrants contribute positively to the development of the country.

Allow me at this point to paint in broad strokes our vision of the GCM. For the Philippines, the GCM must rest on three pillars: First, that human rights of migrants and members of their families, regardless of migration status, must be recognized, protected and fully realized; Second, that the central object of the GCM are the migrants themselves; and Third, that international cooperation and implementation of the principle of shared responsibility of all States is crucial in the success of the GCM.

Madam President, Philippines also sees the GCM as going beyond aspirations. It must deal with the doable commitments. It cannot produce less than what we have agreed upon in the New York Declaration.

As stated by previous speakers, the GCM should also have a review mechanism to gauge the progress of the GCM. We, however, should caution against establishing new institutions or mechanisms when we already have existing mechanisms that maybe utilized and maximized such as the UN regional economic commissions, the regional consultative processes, and similar mechanisms.

For the Philippines, the IOM must play a leadership role in the GCM implementing phase. It must provide technical assistance and expert advice as States fulfill their GCM commitments. IOM's mechanisms such as the global RCPs meeting, could be used as venues to review the GCM. The same could be said for the IOM International Dialogue for Migration (IDM), where orientation could be tweaked to suit the needs of GCM review.

Madam President,

I wish to close this intervention with a non-exhaustive list of ways forward for the IOM:

1. IOM should strengthen its data collection and analysis to better assist migrants and member States;
2. IOM should continue its efforts towards policy formulation utilizing its wealth of experience from working on the ground and seeing first hand what really works. IOM should also be strengthened as a policy organization and not just as an operational organization;
3. IOM, in all its actions and programs, must guard against becoming bureaucratic, inflexible, stagnant and not cost effective; and
4. Finally, the IOM Administration should continue to endeavor to achieve gender balance and equitable geographic representation, particularly at the professional and director level.

Thank you for listening.