



SIERRA LEONE

108th Session of IOM Council

GENERAL STATEMENT

Madame Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

Sierra Leone would like to start by congratulating you and the Bureau for your election to lead the work of the 108th Session of the IOM Council. My delegation will also like to thank Ambassador Quinn of Australia and his Bureau for the commendable work they did over the past year.

This session is particularly important, as it is happening at a time when United Nations Global Compact on Migration is being drawn up and is also one year after the IOM joined the United Nations family. It is also happening at a time when we are witnessing one of the most atrocious consequences of unregulated migration – twenty first century slave-trade of the black people in Libya – a stark reminder of the dark days of slavery. The services of IOM are needed now, more than ever before.

Sierra Leone would like to take this opportunity to call on the international community to conduct an international inquiry into the trade of blacks in Libya, in what now appears to be part of broad plan to lure unsuspected victims from poor African countries, on the pretext of migration for better lives, with the purpose of selling them off at slaves. These cartels should be identified and brought to justice, and the international community should use all the means at its disposal to curb this on-going trend. As has always been the case, Sierra Leone would encourage IOM to seek funds to assist the affected countries to return their nationals without delay.

Madame Chairperson,

For yet another year, the IOM, under the able directorship of Ambassador Lacey Swing, has played an indispensable role as a prime leader on migration issues, addressing, inter alia, the major catastrophes facing the world, whether the Ebola crisis in West Africa or the major Mediterranean migrant crisis, in providing humanitarian assistance, as well as migration in the context of development. Indeed, the growing number of applications for membership and observer status of IOM are a clear manifestation of the appreciation of the work of the organization.

IOM adaptation to integration into the UN System, based on the IOM- UN Agreement, which was signed in 2016, is noteworthy and has enhanced cooperation.

Sierra Leone notes, with appreciation, IOM engagement, over the past year, in humanitarian emergencies, disease outbreak, natural disasters, as well the significant role in addressing the ever- deepening migrant crises, in the face of growing anti-migrant and anti-refugee sentiments and rhetoric.

My delegation also applauds the steps taken by IOM to intensify training and career development, to convene meetings of thematic specialists in areas such as resettlement, return, media and resources, the biennial Chief of Missions and senior officials retreat, as well as the rotation policy, which would enhance the work of Individual staff members and the organization.

It is to be noted that these activities were undertaken, while IOM was providing substantial support to the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary General for International Migration, the co-facilitators and the President of the General Assembly, in the consultation phase leading to negotiations on a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration.

Madame Chairperson,

We are currently witnessing a long-overdue and unprecedented opportunity to address migration in a comprehensive manner. Our expectations of the Global Compact on Migration are that it would bring together both policy and actions to resolve some of the major issues that characterize international migration today and in the future. We have to get this right. Now that IOM is fully integrated into

the United Nations System, it is well placed to be a lead agency in the implementation of the Global Compact, given it has always been a strong advocate for the rationalization of migration and has the policy and operational competence to play that role.

Madame Chairperson,

I cannot conclude without expressing our heartfelt appreciation to IOM for the assistance it has provided to Sierra Leone at our most difficult moments, including during the Ebola crisis. More recently, we have benefited from the development fund to address preparedness for natural disasters, following the mudslides of August this year.

The government of Sierra Leone appreciates the efforts of IOM, particularly the IOM Sierra Leone, in the facilitation of the return of 164 stranded Sierra Leonean nationals from Libya and in support to the national health care capacity through Diaspora engagement.

Madame Chairperson,

I thank you.