

Council of the International Organization for Migration (IOM)

110th Session

General Debate

Statement by Ambassador Elisabeth Tichy-Fisslberger

*Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations Office
and other International Organisations in Geneva*

– CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY –

Mister Chair, Director General, Excellencies and Distinguished Delegates,

At the outset, let me express Austria's sincere appreciation for the excellent leadership of Director General António Vitorino and Deputy Director General Laura Thompson, as well as for the dedicated work of IOM's staff in the field and at headquarters.

Austria aligns itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the European Union and its Member States and wishes to make some additional remarks in its national capacity.

As of today, Europe is still exposed to a high pressure of irregular flows of migrants. Austria continues to be one of the most affected European countries, as a country of transit as well as of destination. In Austria, nearly 15,000 irregularly entering migrants have been intercepted since the beginning of this year. Protracted crisis situations in Syria, Iraq, Libya, Afghanistan and Ukraine continue to cause massive displacement and large-scale movements of refugees and migrants.

At the same time we are well aware that many countries outside Europe, in particular those located in the neighbourhood of protracted conflicts or affected by such conflicts and fragile states, host much larger communities of refugees, displaced persons and migrants. We highly commend their enormous efforts in this regard. Stepping up support to these coun-

tries is paramount. Austria, in the current year, has provided an administrative contribution of 350,000 USD to IOM and is going to provide a voluntary contribution of 1.1 million USD.

Austria remains a country with high numbers of regular immigration and remains committed to the integration of these migrants. Around 17 per cent of the Austrian population have "migration background". Furthermore, we granted international protection to nearly 15,000 persons, subsidiary protection to more than 7,100 persons and humanitarian residence permits to nearly 12,000 persons.

However, in the current situation, also swift and effective return of migrants who have no right to stay in the EU is key for the credibility and proper functioning of migration and asylum systems. Austria has cooperated with IOM in assisted voluntary return programmes for many years. We highly appreciate IOM's expertise in this area. In 2018, around 17,500 refugees could be returned from Libya to their home countries with the assistance of IOM, financially supported by the EU. Austria has supported the project RESTART II with an amount of 2.3 million euros. We are going to support the project RESTART III with a similar amount.

Director General, Austria appreciates IOM's active engagement in countering human trafficking and migrant smuggling. Combatting human trafficking constitutes a priority for the Austrian foreign policy. The challenges encountered in this endeavour have been aggravated through the increase of cross-border crime and the deployment of new technologies. We have to enhance our efforts on national as well as on international levels in order to successfully eliminate the lucrative business model of trafficking in human beings. In this regard, Austria particularly welcomes the launch of the Counter-Trafficking Data Collaborative, IOM's co-leadership in the Anti-Trafficking Task Team of the Global Protection Cluster and the publishment of *the IOM Manual to Address Human Trafficking in Humanitarian Settings*.

While we recognise the potential benefits of migration, we have to bear in mind that only properly managed migration flows can ensure these benefits. Forced displacement and irregular migration undermine the

possibilities for well-managed migration and mobility. Saving lives, ensuring protection for those in need and fighting organised crime responsible for migrant smuggling and trafficking must go hand in hand with effectively addressing the root causes of forced displacement as well as uncontrolled irregular migration flows. In this regard, it is overdue that countries of origin resume their responsibilities towards their own citizens and enhance their efforts to find viable political solutions for the protracted crisis situations. Only the end of suffering of millions of refugees and displaced persons will give us a chance to better focus on sustainable approaches to migration management.

Director General, Austria is grateful for the excellent bilateral relations with your organisation. We are proud to host and substantially support IOM's Country Office as well as the Regional Office for Eastern and South-Eastern Europe and Central Asia in Vienna. We very much look forward to continue our cooperation and wish you all the best for the upcoming year.

Thank you very much.