



110th Session of the Council of IOM
Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Cyprus
H.E. Ambassador George Kasoulides

Mr. Chair,

My country Cyprus aligns with the statement delivered on behalf of the EU and its Member states but I would like to add a few remarks in my national capacity.

Allow me at the outset to congratulate you on your appointment and assure you of Cyprus' support. I also wish to welcome Lebanon as a new member and express Cyprus' readiness to work closely with the country to address the migration challenges in our region. I also wish to reiterate my Government's firm and steadfast commitment to supporting the work done by the International Organisation for Migration.

Mr. Chair,

2019 has been another challenging year for migration. On the positive side, we had the adoption of the Global Compact on Migration, the slow but steady implementation of the SDGs, the significant increase of the IOM's budget. However, we are also witnessing new migration crises all over the world, while the protracted ones persist, proving the necessity of strengthening the IOM.

Mr. Chair,

The latest figures in Europe show that the migration flow is still increasing, especially via the Eastern Mediterranean route. According to the most recent data, there were roughly 28,000 arrivals through the Western Mediterranean/Atlantic route, 14,000 through the Central Mediterranean route and 63,000 via the Eastern Mediterranean route.

In the past four years, Cyprus has faced unprecedented pressure on its asylum and migration system. It is the first host country by population ratio for the third consecutive year, within the EU. In 2018, asylum applications increased 130% compared to the 70% increase of 2017. Thus far, in 2019 the increase is 70% compared to 2018. This is likely to increase, as the military operations carried out during last month in North East Syria by Turkey will likely force more people to migrate.

The greatest challenge we face in Cyprus is irregular migration by sea. A great number of asylum seekers also infiltrate through the buffer zone coming from the occupied part of Cyprus. Although considerable effort is exerted to control irregular migration or to assist with the elimination of the most serious push-factors, the percentage of people willing to risk their lives is still high.

Against this it is imperative to collectively tackle the migration challenges. Our response to migration must be governed by the principle of solidarity and enhanced cooperation is also necessary. International and regional Agreements must be implemented. Readmission Agreements, as well as the 2016 EU-Turkey Statement, need to be respected and fully implemented by all Parties, without discrimination.

To conclude, Mr. Chair, I wish to reassure you of Cyprus' unwavering commitment to working closely with IOM. The IOM's local Office has generated important results in many fields, such as assisting voluntary returns, improvement in healthcare, family reunification, prioritized counseling support for vulnerable groups and combatting xenophobia.

In closing, I would also like to acknowledge the importance of the UN Migration Network which marks one year since its establishment and congratulate it for its invaluable contribution.

Thank you