

**Intervenção de S.Exa. SENEK na 10ª Sessão do Conselho da  
Organização Internacional para as Migrações (OIM)**

(Sala de Conferência da Organização Mundial da Propriedade Intelectual-  
OMPI - Genebra, 26 e 27 de novembro de 2019)

Segmento de Alto-nível

Debate-Geral

(limite de tempo: 10 minutos – nível ministerial)

Mr. Director General,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

At the onset, I would like to thank you for conveying the 110<sup>th</sup> session of the IOM´s Council.

This high-level event provides us with an excellent opportunity to share best practices, discuss common challenges and reaffirm our commitment to build a world where migrations will be safe, orderly and regular.

I am convinced that by promoting an open, realistic and fruitful debate during this session, we will create the proper conditions to tackle the most pressing issues that IOM is facing to fulfil its mandate and to identify the challenges the organization will face ahead.

Mr. Director General,

We are living in challenging and complex times...

In addition to **factors that traditionally threaten international peace and security**, such as territorial, ethnic, religious, cultural and power struggles, there is also an increasing number of **contemporary threats that jeopardize the maintenance of stability and peace** in our societies, challenging the effectiveness of well-known national, regional and international strategies.

Climate change, pandemics, water scarcity, food insecurity, cyberattacks, terrorism, organized crimes and multiple forms of illicit trafficking are some of the contemporary menaces we face.

And most of them are transnational. History has shown us that we cannot fight them alone, as the world has become increasingly interdependent.

More than ever, international cooperation and multilateralism – with the United Nations at its core - are

essential to address old and new threats to peace and security.

Mr. Director General,

Many of the referred old factors and new threats provoke large displacements of people.

And we can be sure that migrants would rather staying close to their families and living in their culture than putting their lives at risk if they could have a choice.

But many do not have a choice, since extreme violence, hunger and the utter lack of alternative for protracted underdevelopment propel them to move to other territories, either within the borders of their countries or outside.

Despite the fact of involving human beings in despair, unfortunately, migration is not rarely used as a very effective narrative for internal political purposes, fueling populisms and authoritarianisms.

**Portugal does not believe in a purely security-oriented approach to human flows.** There are other narratives, other more effective angles to tackle them.

We believe that, despite the challenges they represent, large-scale movements of people have proven, throughout History, to be also sources of renovation for societies.

And Portugal is a very good example of it, since it is - at the same time - a country of origin and destination of migrants.

Millions of Portuguese migrants have significantly contributed to the development of their host countries. In return, Portugal has always welcomed those who have chosen to make Portugal their home.

We share the common belief that the governance of migratory movements means establishing clear and sustainable regular migration routes, tackling irregular migration and fighting against the human trafficker networks.

In the context of the so-called migratory and refugee crisis, Portugal has been actively participating in the **EU´s relocation program**, to alleviate the pressure felt by some EU member States, as well as in the **resettlement schemes**, by receiving refugees temporarily host in Turkey and Egypt.

In the framework of the EU Frontex Agency operations, the Portuguese Navy, Maritime Police and Coastal Gendarmerie has been directly involved, since 2014, in the **rescue** of more than 14.000 migrants in the Mediterranean Sea.

It would be important to mention that the Portuguese government has designated, for the first time in our democracy, a **Secretary of State for Integration and Migration**, which is a sign of the importance we attribute to this matter.

Portugal signed the **Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration**, a non-legally binding multilateral instrument on migration governance which is at the same time consistent with the values enshrined in

the UN Charter, namely its three fundamental pillars - peace and security, human rights and development – and also with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Later, Portugal offered an unearmarked financial contribution to the **UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund** for the implementation of the UN Migration Network.

In its efforts to implement the Global Compact for Migration, Portugal was also one of the first countries in the world to adopt, in August, a National Plan for Migration.

Portugal's **National Plan for Migration** is an operational document. It clearly identifies the sector of the administration and defines the calendar for the implementation of 97 measures.

It is based on five essential dimensions, namely:

- i. Promote safe, orderly and regular migration;
- ii. Improve the integrated management of our borders;

- iii. Enhance the mechanism of reception and integration of migrants;
- iv. Facilitate the link of the migrant with the country of origin and create ways to support voluntary returns;
- v. Step up partnerships for development in the countries of origin and transit of migrants, in order to tackle the roots causes.

Portugal is also active in the protection of refugees and asylum seekers, in close cooperation with UNHCR. In parallel with the implementation of our **National Refugee Resettlement Program**, we are constantly working for the improvement of our legislation in this regard, especially after the adoption of the Global Compact for Refugees.

In this framework, it would be important to refer the **Global Platform for Syrian Students** initiative, launched in 2014 by the former President of Portugal, Jorge Sampaio, which has already provided, in Portugal, higher education, lodging, health care, financial support and Internet access for more than 400 Syrian students.

At the Paris Peace Forum, the Global Platform for Syrian Students presented the project **Rapid Response Mechanism**, which Portugal firmly supports. This multi-stakeholder initiative aims at boosting higher education opportunities for refugees, students in forced displacement, from conflict-affected societies and humanitarian crises, independently of their nationality.

Since only 1 to 3 percent of refugees have access to higher education, I believe that this project is a valid attempt to bridge the gap that undermines the prospect of recovery of war-torn countries and erodes young people´s aspirations and hope for the future.

I encourage you to join and support these initiatives.

Mr. Director General

In all individual or collective efforts that Portugal is involved to help migrants and refugees, it has always found in **IOM an effective and trustworthy partner**.

We cannot but commend IOM´s work, mainly since its accession to the UN system, in 2016, and for being the



lead organization responsible for coordinating the implementation of the Global Compact for Migration.

With you indulgence, I would like to take this opportunity to commend the Director General António Vitorino for the excellent work at the helm of IOM, leading the organization in a context of increasing challenges.

However, just like any other organization, I am convinced that IOM can do more and better. And proceeding with the necessary adjustments demands openness and flexibility from all.

Mr. Director General,

Portugal will continue to adopt integration strategies of migrants and refugees, in order to counteract the scourge of racism and xenophobia.

We will continue to work to encourage resilience and self-reliance of migrants.

**Portugal will continue to ensure that migrants and refugees have unrestricted access to the National Health Service and to the public education system.**

Portugal is determined to uphold the principles of solidarity and responsibility, to respect fully the human rights of migrants and refugees, as it acknowledges that responding effectively to the large-scale movements of peoples has become one of the major challenges of our time.

Thank you!