

COUNCIL

111th Session

**DIRECTOR GENERAL'S REPORT TO THE
111TH SESSION OF THE COUNCIL**

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Geneva
24 to 27 November 2020

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Introduction

1. It is, by now, too prosaic to begin my speech by noting the extraordinariness of 2020. Few years in our recent past have contained such dramatic global change. And yet, with news of a vaccine emerging in recent weeks, we may yet end the year with hope: hope for a return to normality, and even the banality of travel; hope for future recovery, both economic and social; and hope that we will be wiser, post-pandemic, and more deeply aware of the benefits of global cooperation.

2. I am Portuguese, so my hope is still fledgling; and it is my duty to warn you all that not only are we still just part way through this journey, but that some of the deepest impacts – particularly for migrants and displaced populations – may still be yet to come. How deep those impacts go, and the long-term consequences for human mobility, depend in great part on our responses over the coming months.

3. Today I would like to focus on a few key areas of IOM's work this year, and conclude with some thoughts about the future we may find ourselves in. But first I would like to take a moment to offer heartfelt thanks to all of my colleagues at IOM, who have worked tirelessly – with patience, kindness and ingenuity – to support migrants and displaced populations around the world.

4. We have spent a great deal of time this year making sure the Organization remains effective, operational and fit for purpose. But the work I will describe to you today is first and foremost a reflection of the tenacity of IOM staff – their refusal to give up, but rather find solutions to unanticipated problems and persevere in delivering services at a moment when the world has been upended. They have remained on the front line throughout this crisis, continuing to reach migrants and displaced populations in extremely difficult circumstances. I am proud to lead this Organization, and never more so than now.

Resilience

5. IOM has long responded to emergencies and humanitarian crises in all corners of the world, and yet the current pandemic has added a new layer of complexity; it has affected every single one of our offices, in every country. Together with our partners, we have had to adapt the means through which we deliver essential aid in the field – reducing contact with and between groups of concern, while enhancing communication and advocacy campaigns in order to combat bias, prejudice and discrimination.

6. We have invested, with your support, considerable resources in additional measures related to water, sanitation and hygiene; shelter; access to primary health care; and – most importantly – camp management in sites with a high population density, particularly camps and camp-like settings. We have also considerably increased our cash transfers to populations in need of assistance. As a result, we have avoided, by and large, major outbreaks of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) in those settings. We will continue to work towards that objective.

7. Unfortunately, the world's ills are not limited to the global pandemic, and violence, conflict, disasters and human rights violations have continued throughout this past year, displacing ever greater numbers, both within States and across borders.

8. The situation in the central Sahel offers a particularly grim outlook, with millions internally displaced as a result of armed conflict and terrorism, and a humanitarian effort that has not benefited from the required attention or aid resources from the international community. The situation in the central Sahel is having a negative impact across West Africa, including economically. These developments have pushed greater numbers to seek economic solutions and protection further afield, including across the Mediterranean.

9. Recent developments in Southern Africa are equally concerning, particularly in Mozambique, where violence caused by non-State armed groups has caused a new wave of displacement, shortly after the country recovered with difficulty from a series of disasters.

10. In 2020, the bulk of our work has continued to focus on longstanding conflict or crisis situations, for which the international community is continuing to identify lasting and sustainable solutions:

- (a) An ongoing crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic;
- (b) Significant food insecurity in Yemen, amid continued conflict;
- (c) Fluctuating movements of Venezuelan nationals in South America;
- (d) A convergence of conflict and migrant coercion in Libya;
- (e) Continued instability in Nigeria;
- (f) Displaced Rohingya in Bangladesh.

11. By listing these so bluntly, I do not mean to oversimplify. Each context is unique and the circumstances that have led so many to become displaced are complex, resulting from a variety of factors that are often combined with, and made worse by, the effects of climate and environmental change.

12. We continue to apply humanitarian fixes to situations that require a deeper political solution. Without such support, the consequences for these individuals would likely be catastrophic. But in a context in which resources from the small core group of donor countries may become more constrained, the time has come to apply to these crises the political will and collective investment that many governments have displayed in their response to the global pandemic.

13. IOM, as you know, has had a long tradition of working closely with its Member States to support their implementation of solutions, at the service of both their own development and that of their population.

14. In Latin America and the Caribbean, we work closely with those governments hosting Venezuelan nationals so that adequate solutions may be offered, with a long-term aim of community cohesion. I wish to thank the countries of South America and our donors for their continued generosity and solidarity. In Bangladesh, we have developed a close partnership with national and local authorities to improve conditions for the million Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar, whilst mitigating the potentially negative impact this may have on local populations. Equally, we work hand in hand with countries such as Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, who continue to host millions of Syrian refugees.

15. Politically, strategically and financially, COVID-19 will continue to render our work tremendously complex. But IOM has continued to display the key characteristics to which I know you attach great importance – flexibility, responsiveness and agility – while seeking to further strengthen our accountability to affected populations and prevent sexual exploitation and abuse.

16. For migrants and asylum seekers heading for European shores, whether from North Africa or the Western Balkans, we need to improve our approach to rescue at sea and disembarkation. As the President of the European Commission has stated: “Saving lives at sea is not optional.”¹ In recent weeks there has been a multiplication of tragic incidents across the Mediterranean and increasingly in the Atlantic, close to the Canary Islands. The European Union must seize the momentum created by the proposed New Pact on Migration and Asylum to take decisive action now. This is particularly the case in Libya, where migrants in detention face unimaginable conditions.

17. In the Horn of Africa and the Gulf, thousands continue to suffer at the hands of human traffickers and smugglers, who take advantage of chaos and instability in Yemen while the world looks elsewhere. Some progress may be made in this regard in the future, and we are working closely with both countries of origin and destination, notably Ethiopia and Saudi Arabia, to bring greater coherence to the way in which population flows are managed in the region.

18. In many of these situations, vulnerable migrants often find themselves mixed with internally displaced persons and refugees. Based on this, we have further strengthened our partnership with the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees. Together we have brought greater clarity and transparency to our joint operations and we will continue to enhance our efforts in this regard.

19. With respect to internal displacement, record numbers have been driven from their homes as a result of conflict and disaster. Internal displacement makes up the majority of IOM's crisis-related programming. In 2019, we had an operational scale of 21 million internally displaced persons and 6 million individuals in affected communities. Over 400 field offices worldwide are directly implementing programmes, and we have the ability to surge our humanitarian capacity from the earliest stages of a crisis.

20. Our on-the-ground presence is unique. Equally so is our presence throughout the cycle of a crisis, linking humanitarian responses to peacebuilding, recovery, community stabilization and development, and adapting over multi-year programmes to evolving new realities. In doing so, our work is multisectoral, building relationships of trust with populations, communities and authorities. This, for IOM, is the humanitarian, development and peace nexus in action.

21. The High-level Panel on Internal Displacement has given us an opportunity to reflect on these capacities and on what we have learned through our programming, from Somalia to Iraq. We believe there is a critical need to invest more deeply in disaster risk reduction, preparedness and prevention in order to safeguard existing development gains and secure future economic and societal well-being. Community-based approaches – with strong local ownership and design – are essential to ensure that our interventions do not create parallel structures and services.

22. IOM's broader expertise on mobility has added critical value to Panel's exploration of available solutions, as has IOM's leadership on internal displacement data. On this latter point, we intend to further expand our data work in 2021. We look forward to the deliberations and outcomes of the High-level Panel and engaging with you to ensure robust, comprehensive and sustainable proposals to support internally displaced persons across the world.

¹ Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, “Building the world we want to live in: A Union of vitality in a world of fragility”, State of the Union Address at the European Parliament Plenary, Brussels, 16 September 2020. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/ov/SPEECH_20_1655.

Mobility

23. We have experienced an unprecedented period of immobility in 2020, one which has caused all of us to review our dependence on – as well as the fragilities of – a globalized world. We have seen an extraordinary dip in the issuance of visas and work permits across Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development member countries, down by 46 per cent during the first half of 2020 compared with the same period in 2019,² as crossing borders was restricted and the wheels of immigration bureaucracy ground to a halt.

24. The response to the virus has affected all countries, territories and areas, fundamentally impacting mobility and causing damage to the health and livelihoods of millions. COVID-19 has exacerbated the existing vulnerabilities of migrants, and yet also opened up new spaces for innovative solutions to migration challenges. In some quarters, it has reminded us what is essential work and who is carrying that out.

25. We have equally seen bold developments – from regularization processes in Italy to reaffirmed commitments to regular migration in Canada – which give us some expectation that a path back to normality will be found. We hope that governments continue to show willingness to work to establish a new equilibrium on migration, even while economies recover, recognizing the deeply integrated role migrants play in our societies.

26. The IOM Strategic Vision 2019–2023 prioritizes IOM’s work with governments and other stakeholders to adapt the tools used to manage mobility in step with changing migration dynamics. Though unforeseen, the pandemic has created a significant demand in this regard, to which we have responded.

27. The global suspension of travel, combined with a sudden spike in unemployment, has left many migrants stranded with little support. While many countries have extended visas and offered material support to avoid irregularity and possible destitution, we estimate there to be over 2.75 million migrants of concern, including those who wish to return to their countries of origin but are unable to do so due to lack of resources and border closures. Loss of income and – sometimes unexpected – irregularity of status have increased vulnerability. We have seen refugee resettlement drop in 2020, with an attendant backlog of cases as governments reopen their borders.

28. For those able to return, reintegration support is critical. Many will go back to households that they themselves used to support with remittances, and risk becoming an extra mouth to feed at a time of pressure, which may push some to remigrate irregularly. For those who remain stranded, access to basic services and meeting basic needs has become a daily struggle that requires urgent attention.

29. In terms of returns, IOM has been providing comprehensive support pre-departure, during travel, and after arrival. Over the past few months, IOM has negotiated humanitarian corridors and opening of airspace, capitalizing on a decentralized and flexible travel management structure. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, IOM has offered travel assistance to thousands of migrants, and developed tools to manage and assess global operational capacities. In doing so, we have harnessed available technology to access and keep in touch with stranded migrants – including through virtual counselling, online self-registration, and electronic cash-based interventions. While these have been critical during the pandemic, these innovations will serve migrants long into the future.

² Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, COVID-19 crisis puts migration and progress on integration at risk. 19 October 2020. Available at <http://www.oecd.org/>.

Box 1. Adapting migrant support during the pandemic

COVID-19 containment measures have necessitated the adjustment of traditional ways of interacting with beneficiaries, which were primarily (and ideally) in person. Social distancing measures and lockdowns have required staff working on migrant protection and assistance to create digital alternatives. These have included hotlines for the provision of information, the development of mobile applications, virtual counselling and psychosocial support, remote monitoring and the use of social media for communications and community outreach.

For example, the Virtual Counselling project of IOM Germany allows migrants living in Germany to contact IOM staff in 16 countries of origin via social media and online messaging services and receive culturally sensitive assisted voluntary return and reintegration counselling. Introduced in 2019, and therefore prior to the pandemic, the initiative proved additionally useful during the first wave. Virtual counselling remained in place even while in-person services were suspended, providing migrants with the opportunity to speak to a counsellor in their country of origin, thereby providing a safe space to promote psychosocial resilience. Additionally, migrants were able to learn about movement restrictions, quarantine measures, and health-related issues from a trusted source in their native language. The IOM Office in Germany has engaged with other missions to share their experience, including offices in the Western Balkans, Greece, and the Gambia.

In addition, IOM has expanded the use of cash-based interventions during the pandemic. Such interventions have primarily been used in humanitarian settings; however, given the overcrowded nature of distribution sites and the need to reduce transmission risks, cash-based interventions have proved a safe means to provide rapid relief to stranded and returning migrants. For example, in Iraq, supported by the Government of Canada, cash assistance was provided to vulnerable migrant workers from Bangladesh and the Philippines who had lost their income due to the pandemic.

30. Similarly, for migrants at risk of exclusion more generally, IOM has adapted its interventions in the field to ensure continued outreach, through information campaigns, distance learning and initiatives to encourage digital social mixing. At a time when hate speech, misinformation and xenophobia is increasing, online engagement to counter such narratives is ever more important.

Box 2. Reaching migrants during the pandemic

Without physical contact, outreach to migrant populations has become much harder. However, IOM offices around the world have developed new programming to fill gaps in their service provision, as well as address emerging needs.³ Materials have been developed to support IOM staff in this regard, including guidelines on virtual facilitation developed by the Regional Office in Vienna.

Several offices have developed social media campaigns to promote migrant inclusion and social mixing. In South America, the “One Step Closer” campaign produces audiovisual content to counter prejudice against migrants and refugees under the auspices of the Regional Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela. In Panama, IOM organized a virtual camp for children between the ages of 5 and 12.

IOM Bangladesh has established an interactive voice response mass communication tool – the Covid Info Line – which uses pre-recorded information and messaging through phone networks to disseminate critical information and collect feedback in languages known to the users. IOM Italy has

³ For further information, see IOM, [The Power of Digitalization in the Age of Physical Distancing: Strengthening social connections and community cohesion through the digital inclusion and connectivity of migrants](#). DISC Digest. Fourth edition, November 2020.

produced key information about COVID-19 symptoms, transmission and social distancing in 32 different languages to facilitate community outreach.

Some offices have invested in e-learning: IOM Brazil has facilitated linguistic inclusion for migrant and refugee children accessing remote learning, by translating key educational materials into English, French and Spanish. Meanwhile, in Slovakia, many of the services offered through the IOM Migrant Information Centre have been transferred online, including legal advice and information on residence, employment and visa applications.

31. The dramatic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have revealed the critical need to rethink how we develop evidence-based policies and practices to manage travel in a health-secure manner, including the movement of essential migrant workers and their families and of those in need of humanitarian protection. IOM's in-depth work around data, health and border management – and specifically at points of entry – has brought home the importance of a multisectoral approach, and multifaceted expertise.

32. Much of this work is practical. IOM staff have undertaken health screenings and checks for migrants to enable cross-border work. In Mozambique, IOM programming has facilitated the return to work of thousands of miners in South Africa, thanks to collaboration between the two governments.

33. From a policy perspective, IOM has offered assessments at points of entry, offering advice on how to integrate health concerns into complex immigration and border management systems, including through the use of digital technologies.

34. There is a clear need to invest in data and information, as States calibrate – and recalibrate – their entry procedures in the face of fluctuating infection rates. IOM has developed a global point of entry survey to map, track and analyse the impact the pandemic is having at land, sea and air borders, and other key locations of internal mobility. This has resulted in a database containing information on over 3,500 points of entry, complementing the Organization's mapping of global travel restrictions initiated at the outset of the pandemic.

35. The pandemic has demonstrated the need for strong investment in global health security as a key component of well-managed migration systems, as well as a global dialogue that addresses the links between mobility and health. The COVID-19 pandemic will fundamentally reshape the migration, health and border management landscape. Ensuring that there is an international forum to store, analyse and exchange information, establish common understanding and identify gaps in that data, will be key.

36. In this regard, IOM has begun working with a number of regional entities to foster information exchange and the development of stronger guidelines and standards for cross-border travel, to support regional integration and mobility, and to facilitate free movement as part of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement.

Box 3. Facilitating more predictable mobility during the pandemic

As the ripple effects of multiple border closures are felt, IOM is supporting a number of regions to improve the predictability of trade and travel.

In Africa, IOM is working with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, the African Union Commission and the New Partnership for Africa's Development to prepare continental guidelines on trade and transport facilitation for the movement of persons, goods and services across Africa during the COVID-19 pandemic, which aim to contain the spread of COVID-19 while facilitating the movement of essential goods, including food and medical supplies.

In South America, IOM is responding to a request from the MERCOSUR Specialized Forum on Migration and the South American Conference on Migration to systematize available information on the measures adopted across the region to address the pandemic, including a web platform to promote the reopening of borders through stronger mutual exchange of relevant information.

37. But while we continue adapt our work to pandemic conditions, we are also pivoting to the long-term socioeconomic impacts and the need to maintain focus on the Sustainable Development Goals to avoid regression. This will be tough in a context where development needs are increasing and financial commitments will come under pressure. However, colleagues are working hard at all levels of the Organization to ensure that migration is fully integrated into United Nations recovery planning.

38. As part of its growing role and recognition within the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, of which IOM has now become a member of the Core Group, IOM is stepping up its efforts to help Member States implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Focusing on the Sustainable Development Goals is even more urgent today. For example, the Organization's operational presence and capacity has meant it has played an instrumental role in the multi-country office review of the United Nations, bringing high-quality tailored services to the States who need them, many of which are small island developing States. IOM is working hard to assist countries and territories covered by the multi-country offices, especially in areas of climate change, mobility and displacement, disaster risk reduction and resilience.

Governance

39. What we have learned this past year during the COVID-19 pandemic is something that we have always known: that transboundary challenges can be met only through multilateral efforts. The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration was born of the recognition that no one State can address the challenges of migration, nor benefit from its opportunities, alone.

40. Earlier this year, the United Nations Secretary-General called on the world to reimagine human mobility, to uphold human dignity and respect human rights, even while implementing travel restrictions and border controls. This call highlights the need for more cooperation and collaboration within and among States. And it is through such multilateral efforts, including with stakeholders, that we have always shown that migration is for the benefit of all.

41. On 1 December, the Secretary-General will release his first biennial report on the implementation of the Global Compact. It will show that, despite the challenges of the past year, the Compact is alive and well. Progress is not, and never will be, linear, but we have valuable indications that governments and other stakeholders are using the document as a framework for developing national migration policy and governance. The regional reviews that are currently under way are a vital opportunity for States to come together to discuss and evaluate how to strengthen regional cooperation in support of the

implementation of the Global Compact, while further bolstering their own efforts. I thank all those States who have actively contributed thus far.

42. COVID-19 has highlighted the potential for the Compact to navigate new, often unanticipated challenges. We have seen how States have explored alternatives to detention, expanded access to health services and suspended returns, to reduce risks to migrants' health and well-being. Equally however, there are cases where, under the pretext of containing the virus, State practice has exacerbated existing inequalities and seriously eroded migrants' rights and dignity, too often at the cost of their lives.

43. A key challenge for the governments that have adopted the Compact will be to maintain and embed the positive practices that have emerged during the early part of the pandemic, while not backsliding on the protection and inclusion of migrants. Here, the United Nations system – and specifically the United Nations Network on Migration – has played a vital role in drawing out the real impacts of events on migrants and drawing links to the guidance offered by the Global Compact.

44. Since the beginning of the year, regional migration coordination structures have been either created or strengthened, alongside many national networks, continuing a vital process of embedding the Network across the United Nations system. I also welcome the 14 countries from across the world who have officially confirmed their willingness to become champion countries and further promote the visibility and relevance of the Global Compact.

45. The Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund has been fully established, and in October, its Steering Committee selected its first joint programmes for support. However, the high demand for Trust Fund supported programming far outweighs its current resources of approximately USD 12.5 million, and efforts to mobilize additional resources have been significantly impacted by the pandemic. I therefore repeat my appeal for as many of you as possible to contribute as generously as you can. IOM is strongly invested in the success of the Network, in its role as coordinator as well as part of, and partner to, the United Nations family.

46. Beyond the Network, IOM has engaged in partnerships on a number of fronts. This year we have signed memorandums of understanding with the United Nations Development Programme and the International Labour Organization, to strengthen our common interests and work. I am extremely pleased to announce that today I will be signing a memorandum of understanding with the Gavi Alliance, to further our joint work to ensure equitable access for migrants to a COVID-19 vaccine. Looking forward, closer collaboration with international financial institutions will be a priority for the Organization as we seek to mitigate the deepest impacts of the pandemic on the most vulnerable.

Migrant health

47. Even before the pandemic, migrants too often fell outside social safety nets and lacked basic access to health services. This not only impacted their well-being, but also undermined our societies as a whole. As the world faces the COVID-19 pandemic, the principles of universal health coverage and the "Leave no Migrant Behind" campaign, have never been more relevant.

48. There is no us versus them. Universal health coverage will not be truly universal, and target 3.8 of the Sustainable Development Goals will not be achieved, unless health coverage and financial protection measures in all countries progressively include migrants, especially those who are marginalized. I cannot emphasize enough the importance of equitable primary health-care systems to reduce stigma and remove health-care barriers, particularly in fragile settings. IOM has been supporting countries to develop their capacity and infrastructure.

Box 4. Building health capacity and infrastructure

IOM has worked closely with the Government of the United Kingdom in Cox's Bazar to design, construct and equip three isolation and treatment centres, as well as upgrading two existing health facilities to provide dignified and efficient treatment to COVID-19 patients. This has included training hundreds of health workers and established outreach teams to promote the use of the health facilities.⁴

In the Sudan, IOM has completed the rehabilitation of Jabra hospital, designed to treat and isolate patients with COVID-19, with support from the Government of Denmark and the private sector, in collaboration with the Khartoum State Ministry of Health. IOM, working with local partner Human Development Concern and the Ministry of Health, has opened a health centre for internally displaced mothers and children in Kabasa, Somalia, funded by the Government of Japan. IOM is supporting several dozen health facilities across Somalia.

In cooperation with the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Nexleaf Analytics, IOM is addressing the challenges faced by refugee health providers in the delivery of routine immunizations in camps and surrounding communities in Kenya and the United Republic of Tanzania, by procuring and installing essential equipment for clinics, providing training, reviewing protocols and strengthening the monitoring and evaluation of their cold chain capacity.

49. With news of a potential vaccine, we now need urgent and dedicated efforts to ensure equitable access to a COVID-19 vaccine for people on the move, especially in countries and communities with fragile health systems.

50. Many millions of migrants and displaced persons today are included in immunization campaigns worldwide, whether by national health authorities, or by the United Nations and other aid organizations. However, far too many have not been reached by these campaigns. It is often the poorest, those who find themselves in irregular situations, or those displaced by natural disaster or conflict, who do not have equitable access to immunization.

51. All countries should ensure that an adequate percentage of the stock is reserved for forcibly displaced persons and non-nationals – regardless of their immigration status. To ensure fully effective outreach, we will need to work with community organizations to address possible misinformation and fear, ensuring that information is provided in languages understood by migrant communities and in a culturally adequate manner.

52. IOM stands ready to support governments at all levels to ensure that any immunization campaign rolled-out for COVID-19 includes migrants and other people on the move.

⁴ IOM, IOM, UK Emergency Medical Team Continue COVID-19 Health Support for Refugees, Locals in Cox's Bazar. 13 October 2020. Available at <https://www.iom.int/>; IOM, IOM Bangladesh: Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis Response – Monthly Situation Report August 2020. Available at <https://www.iom.int/>.

Box 5. IOM vaccination programming

A key concern emerging from the pandemic is a sharp decline in vaccination for other diseases, including measles, with programming suspended in a number of countries. IOM undertakes vaccination activities in over 80 countries to improve the health of migrants, refugees, internally displaced persons and host communities. This is not just about increasing key vaccine coverage but reducing the risk of migrants arriving in destination countries with vaccine-preventable diseases.

Along with its partners – national health authorities, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Children’s Fund, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Gavi Alliance and others – IOM has long worked to ensure that mobile populations have proper access to routine vaccinations. In 2019, more than 380,000 children under the age of 5 in emergency settings were vaccinated against polio and/or measles by IOM. In addition, as part of pre-migration health services, over 445,800 vaccination doses were administered to close to 181,350 migrants and refugees in the process of migration.

IOM performs immunizations against 15 different diseases. Vaccines are procured for its migration health assessments from reputable manufacturers and distributors and prioritizes the procurement of WHO pre-qualified vaccines. It will be important to maintain levels of programming even during the roll out of a COVID-19 vaccine.

Institutional development

53. Before turning to some final thoughts about the future, I would like to update you on our progress in strengthening IOM.

54. Following the presentation of the IOM Strategic Vision at the last Council meeting, we have breathed life into its objectives, starting with the development of nine regional strategies, tailoring the Vision to specific regional contexts, and facilitating cross-regional discussion and collaboration between our field offices. These strategies will be launched in each region over the coming weeks. While they are of course each different in content, we see common themes and concerns emerging, including the need for stronger data collection and analysis, and the urgent need to address climate and environmental change, which cohere with the institutional strategies developed at Headquarters level.

55. The regional strategies are complemented by the *IOM Continental Strategy for Africa 2020–2024*, which sets out priorities for partnership with the African Union, regional economic communities, and governments. I deeply value our strong relationships within the African continent; indeed, the Africa Migration Report, a joint publication between IOM and the African Union Commission, highlights the potential of migration for development in the region, as the continent strides towards a new era of free movement.

56. We have finalized and presented to you the Migration Data Strategy, and are turning now to its implementation. We are moving to strengthen our regional data capacity by appointing data specialists, as well as strengthening the quality of the Organization’s data output through a quality review board. As noted earlier, IOM will also strengthen its leadership on data on internal displacement, enhancing collaboration with other agencies and experts, safeguarding standards on ethics and governance, and raising visibility.

57. As previously outlined to you, IOM is finalizing its institutional strategy on migration, climate change and the environment. Building on our well-established institutional objectives, the Strategy will

articulate how IOM can support States and migrants in dealing with the challenges posed by climate change and provide relevant tools in that regard.

58. With a brutal hurricane season in the Americas now overlapping with an intense season of tropical storms and cyclones, and floods affecting multiple countries across the Horn of Africa, it is clear that IOM's efforts to build resilience in the most deeply affected populations are becoming ever more urgent. Despite our immediate concerns, we must not lose sight of the fundamental and long-term challenges facing the world.

59. Consultations with Member States and partners on our developing Legal Identity Strategy will soon take place, with finalization expected during the first half of 2021. IOM plays an important role helping States to provide trusted legal identity for mobile populations, including migrants. This includes assistance and advice on the responsible use of new technology – including biometric solutions – in full respect of the applicable human rights standards and good practice. As a founding member of the United Nations Legal Identity Agenda Task Force, IOM is working successfully with its United Nations partners to include global mobility within the United Nations Legal Identity Agenda. Furthermore, efforts are ongoing to intensify the Organization's existing cooperation with the World Bank.

60. IOM's efforts to strengthen knowledge management and results-based reporting will be strengthened by the development and roll-out of a strategic results framework, which sets out the objectives through which the Organization's work will be measured. This sits alongside more bespoke efforts to draw together IOM's work in specific areas, including the Migration Policy Repository, developed and managed by the Policy Hub, to offer colleagues a single location to access all of the Organization's policy work. The Policy Hub is now working to develop virtual workspaces in the Repository to facilitate online collaboration on key policy issues.

61. Our efforts to pursue stronger policy coherence across the Organization continue. Over the past year, the Policy Hub has worked with colleagues across Headquarters and in the field to develop new guiding principles on return and reintegration, placing stronger emphasis on the protection of returnees and investment in their sustainable reintegration. We have developed a new framework for civil society engagement, to ensure that these key partnerships realize their full potential and put into action the key principles of the *IOM Institutional Strategy on Migration and Sustainable Development 2019–2023*, which was launched in 2019.

62. The COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced the urgent need to develop IOM's voice on key issues – both as an institution and through the United Nations Network on Migration. Over the past six months, IOM has worked to ensure strong and more coherent messaging on core concerns regarding migrant inclusion. In 2021, we aim to further strengthen our capacity for strategic communication, linking it more closely to the Organization's policy work.

63. You have all by now had an opportunity to review the *Application of the Internal Governance Framework Work Plan*, and I would like to thank you for your commitment to this extensive root and branch reform of IOM's internal processes. Your continued support is essential and I hope I can count on it in 2021, and beyond. We have made significant progress in a number of areas, including in internal justice, financial management and human resources, and we will continue to engage with you regularly to update you on future progress.

64. The first phase of the Business Transformation process has commenced, with colleagues from across the Organization – both at Headquarters and in the field – now involved in updating and, where necessary, redesigning the way we currently work. Digitization of work processes and data collection will feature prominently in the move to a new enterprise resource planning system, which will help drive efficiencies, accountability and transparency across the Organization. This transformation will

also call for the development and application of a robust change management strategy. We will continue to advocate with Member States for specific funding for the Business Transformation, given its overall cost and the need for predictable year-on-year funding over the course of the process. The move to a new enterprise resource planning system is essential to ensure that IOM can continue to be a reliable partner to Member States, donors and beneficiaries in the coming years.

65. At the same time, we continue to look for ways to strengthen the IOM budget, which will be particularly challenging in a context where needs are greater and purses strained. In 2020, the Working Group on Budget Reform held three meetings to discuss proposals to introduce changes to the financial framework of the Organization and improvements to the budget regulations, with the aim of aligning the regulations with the current reality. I thank all of you for your work in this regard and we look forward to continuing discussions on the options that have already been presented in order to ensure that IOM has a more sustainable long-term funding model.

66. Similarly, I would like to thank you all for your commitment to IOM's development, both in terms of financial support, and the flexible and unearmarked contributions that many of you continue to make, as well as your landmark consensus on constitutional change.

67. In the coming months, we will follow the negotiated process to appoint two Deputy Directors General, further enhancing the Organization's leadership and allowing us to grow in a sustainable and accountable manner. This will necessitate a reorganization of Headquarters functions to ensure that we realize the potential of this milestone development during the first half of next year. We will take the opportunity to strengthen key executive functions and management capacities, and further facilitate cross-organizational collaboration.

Future of migration and mobility

68. I would like to finish by bringing your attention to some of the longer-term effects of the pandemic. Migration – as part of a broader upheaval of global human mobility – remains deeply uncertain in terms of future scope and dynamics. And we must distinguish here between two lines of analysis: the impact on future potential migration flows, and the impact on migrants themselves.

69. A broad range of factors, both direct and indirect, will affect the characteristics and scale of migration. Some of these are clear, from the short-term impact of global immobility to the longer-lasting effects of economic recession. We will have to be patient as scientists develop the vaccines that may reintroduce stability back into our lives and allow us to focus on recovery.

70. But it is clear that we may soon reach a series of tipping points that will affect the nature of migration, particularly if the current state of immobility increases the future costs of movement, reintroducing greater inequality into the world of travel; some may be excluded, while others may be pushed into irregular forms of movement and seek to use facilitators.

71. Changes in the labour market will impact the demand for migrant labour in the short- to medium-term. Structurally integrated forms of migrant labour – notably seasonal agricultural work – will likely prove resilient to this, as they have thus far. But managing fluctuations in demand and ensuring that those who migrate are not left in precarious situations, vulnerable to exploitation, should remain a key concern. Efforts will need to be redoubled to ensure ethical recruitment and standards in the labour market, while maintaining key channels of entry for migrants.

72. Lastly, the world of work is changing around us: for some, work can only be done in situ; for many more, the experience of remote working may – over time – lead employers to make different calculations as to what “office work” means. Access to highly skilled employment may not, in future,

be so clearly wedded to migration if overseas workers can perform their functions remotely. If the urban centres that have characterized office work for several centuries fall into decline, this will also have an impact on the service economies in which migrants are overrepresented, including small businesses owned by migrants. Successive lockdowns have already imperilled this sector and those employed by it.

73. With respect to the impacts on migrants, these are both direct and looming. Migrants are already experiencing greater uncertainty and exclusion from the labour market, but experience from previous recessions tells us that the coming global recession will have long-term scarring effects on migrant groups, especially young people. We have particular concern for migrant women – the estimated 8.5 million migrant women working in the domestic sector, as well as those working in the informal economy.

74. Our recent publication with the World Food Programme highlights the growing risk of food insecurity for displaced populations and the broader impacts for the millions who may fall into poverty.⁵ This is closely linked to trade and investment, particularly for those whose livelihoods depend on cross-border trade.

75. These impacts will play out in different ways, not all of them linear. How will a failure to facilitate safe and secure movement across borders affect the propensity to undertake dangerous, clandestine journeys? How will the pause in focus on climate change and environmental degradation affect those whose lives and livelihoods are inching away with each passing year?

76. How governments react in the coming months will determine the depth of those impacts. We have to double down on solutions that can mitigate the short-term effects now, in order to reduce deeper impacts in the future. Equally, we should recognize that regional mobility can help facilitate national recovery. We must keep our eye on the horizon, ensuring that the discourse on human mobility maintains focus on the longer-term drivers of migration, including demographic divides, persistent income inequality, emerging transnational networks, and labour market mismatches.

77. It is incumbent upon us all to ensure that migrants do not fall behind, or fall out of our societies, just as it is incumbent upon us to respect their human rights and dignity, even while times are hard. Although I have spoken extensively about migrants' vulnerabilities during this pandemic, I would like also to recognize their resilience and strength. This year, we have heard stories of migrant networks rallying around those who have found themselves without employment or status. While remittances have dropped across the world, we have seen some communities surge remittances to support families at home. We should also not forget the thousands of migrants who have supported our communities throughout the pandemic – whether by working or by volunteering.

78. Our goal is to make it easier, not harder, for migrants, displaced populations and their communities to thrive, whether by reducing the costs of remittances, as foreseen in the Global Compact, or by investing in skills and education. While an individual should not be judged solely on the basis of their economic or societal contribution, the fact that two of the scientists credited with developing one of the most promising vaccines against COVID-19 are the children of Turkish immigrants reminds us that migration truly can benefit us all.

79. Migrants are integral to our societies, and for that we should be grateful.

⁵ World Food Programme and IOM, [Populations at risk: Implications of COVID-19 for hunger, migration and displacement](#), November 2020.