



CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

111th Session of the Council of IOM
Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Cyprus
H.E. Ambassador George Kasoulides

Mr. Chair,

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

This year has been an extraordinary year due to the COVID-19 pandemic and a challenge for governments in deciding on emergency measures in support of their nationals and migrants, while upholding the UN Sustainable Goals of Development.

It is also a challenging year for migration, with **increasing migratory** flows. Cyprus remains the EU Member State with the highest number of applications for international protection in relation to its population size, for the fourth year in a row. We are witnessing considerable pressures in our migratory system with thousands of new irregular crossings, to which the response is immediate and supportive of their human rights. Regardless of the pressure in the high numbers of migrants arriving irregularly (by sea or the green line), Cyprus identified shortcomings and improved its reception system. It is especially in times like this, that the objectives of the Global Compact for Migration should be sustained by all; so, should international cooperation, solidarity and responsibility-sharing prevail.

The majority (70%) of **irregular migrant arrivals to Cyprus come via Turkey** and through the occupied area, via the buffer zone, which does not constitute an external border of the EU. Therefore, it is essential to implement an equivalent standard of protection. The sea routes are also used with boats carrying migrants departing mainly from Turkey, Syria and Lebanon. I stress the importance of the **implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement** and the absence of substantial steps taken by Turkey towards its proper and non-discriminatory application. The new route towards EU via Cyprus is a result of this policy.

Cyprus has requested from Frontex the surveillance of its maritime borders in order to stop or at least to reduce the crossings from Turkey. We have also signed a **Readmission Agreement** with Lebanon and we are in the process of signing a Readmission Agreement with India and other third countries.

Another challenge is **dealing with the impact of the pandemic**, such as taking measures to protect the population, including of course the people in the Reception Centers. A medical office with adequate medical support was established, including quarantine zones for newcomers for a two-week accommodation, as part of the preventive measures.

Moreover, Cyprus in the framework of its efforts to manage the increased migratory flows, proceeded with the **amendment** of its Refugee Law, its Aliens and Immigration Law and upgraded the Administrative Court for International Protection Law.

Mr. Chair,

I would also like to take this opportunity to commend IOM for its leading role in coordinating the implementation of the UN Compact on Migration and congratulate it for successfully managing the First Regional Review of the Compact earlier this month. The UN Compact on Migration continues to be a key element of the world migration policy and has our strong support. To this effect, Cyprus has contributed financially to the UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund and we pledge to renew our contribution in 2020.

We should also mention that negotiating a new **Pact on Migration and Asylum** is an important step towards the realization of a Common European Asylum and Migration policy. Cyprus is ready to reach an adequate compromise solution, achieving a balance between international obligations, responsibility and solidarity.

Allow me to make reference to the cooperation of the government with IOM country office, specifically, in their immediate, COVID – 19 response, which contributed to sustain rights on education and access to the labor market, and achieved relocation, family reunification and transition to independent living, achieving thus, objectives 3, 7, 15 and 21 of the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. Challenges this year, includes voluntary returns. IOM's collaboration with the government, and with other IOMs offices (Nepal and India), achieved the voluntary return of 84 migrants, on a humanitarian charter flight. Our objectives are the same and I am certain that we will continue to strengthen our partnership and cooperation for a more efficient migration management.

Thank you!