

**Statement by the Republic of Malta for the General Debate of the  
111<sup>th</sup> Session of the Council of the  
International Organization for Migration  
-24-27 November 2020 -**

Mr Chair,

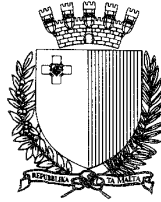
Malta aligns itself with the statements delivered by the European Union and would like to make some additional remarks in its national capacity.

Over the past years, Malta has experienced a disproportionate flow of irregular migrants due to its geographical position, being located in the midst of one of the most utilised migration routes in the world. Up till 8 November, the number of people crossing irregularly this year from North Africa to Southern Europe along the Central Mediterranean route has reached 32,774 - an increase of over 130% compared to the same period last year. Malta does not have the carrying capacity to take in more irregular migrants. As my Foreign Minister noted very recently, everyone tells us that we must not be allowed to carry the burden on our own. Yet, this is what often happens.

Migration is indeed a challenge that cannot be addressed by any State on its own, but collectively. In this regard, we fully share IOM's views regarding the European Union's "*New Pact on Asylum and Migration*", that this package provides a 'unique opportunity' and solid basis for the EU to move forward towards a more predictable and better functioning asylum and migration system in Europe – a system which includes solidarity and burden-sharing among EU Member States at its core.

Mr Chair

At this current juncture, it would be remiss not to refer to the impact that the current COVID-19 pandemic has had on migration. From the onset of the

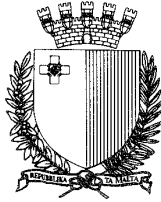


pandemic, the immediate response by most countries was to limit cross-border travel and introduce travel restrictions to prevent the spread of the contagion and minimising the strain on the national health system. As often reminded by the Director-General, large numbers of migrants worldwide have lost their livelihood, had to return to their countries of origin or remained stranded abroad, and face heightened discrimination and xenophobia. They have often also faced specific challenges related to healthcare, due to barriers to receiving public health messages and accessing health and related services due to language and transport issues. Nonetheless migrants have also had an invaluable role in our efforts to address and control the spread of COVID-19 and treat those affected by it. Like many other countries, Malta relies on migrant medical and health personnel as front-line workers. We recognise that they have actively contributed to the country's response to the pandemic and strengthen the national health system.

As the current challenging economic conditions continue to worsen because of the pandemic, more people are going to find themselves in difficult situations that can be exploited by smugglers and human traffickers. We must therefore ensure, now more than ever, that migration remains a choice, not a necessity born out of desperation. It must also be a choice that can be undertaken in a safe, orderly and regular way.

Mr Chair

Malta has long advocated finding solutions together with our partners in the region. The adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular



Migration (GCM) presented a welcome opportunity to move towards such cooperation on a global scale and to manage migration comprehensively to the benefit of both migrants and host communities. Ultimately, however, its effectiveness depends on its ability to address the specific and particular problems of countries and people around the world. We welcome IOM's important role in ensuring better coordination on migration within the UN system and follow-up on the implementation of the GCM, also in its function of coordinator and secretariat for the Network on Migration. In this regard, Malta remains committed to the implementation of the GCM and to work with partners within this framework, as demonstrated in the recent Regional Review of the GCM for which Malta has submitted a national contribution.

Mr Chair

Last but not least, allow me to express our gratitude to IOM for its constant support extended to my country, including through capacity building and assistance in the relocation of migrants disembarked in Malta. Over the years, this cooperation has grown strong and we hope to have the opportunity to strengthen it even further in the future.

Thank you.