

IOM Council - 111th Session

24-27 November 2020

General Debate

Statement by Portugal

Thank you Chair

Portugal aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

Let me start by welcoming the Russian Federation to the IOM membership as well as Malaysia as an observer to our discussions.

We thank the Director-General for his statement and update on current activities, and we praise his continued efforts regarding the reform agenda. The recently adopted decision to strengthen the top management of IOM, on the basis of his proposal, will allow the Organization to better adapt to the current challenges and better respond to the increased needs of migrants.

In fact, this Council Session takes place in an unprecedented context and format as a result of the COVID pandemic, which impacted more significantly the populations already in vulnerable situations, particularly migrants and forcibly displaced people. Whether they are on the move or settled in another country or region, these populations face wider protection challenges and need more urgent action.

We commend the IOM for quickly adapting to the new reality:

- by assuring continuity of activities and programmes, when mobility was hindered,

- and for keeping those living in camps as safe and healthy as possible, in conditions sometimes hard to imagine.

Let me express our gratitude to the IOM staff for their commitment to deliver under very challenging conditions.

The current pandemic, however, has also showcased the vital part migrants play in our communities, and their positive contribution to the development in both countries of origin and destination. History has shown us that migration can be a source of renovation of societies - Portugal is a good example, as a country of origin and destination.

Therefore, the pandemic should also be perceived as an opportunity to improve policies and actions.

In fact, the need for a more effective migration governance, as well as the need of inclusive action, became crucial, making the **Global Compact on Migration** even more relevant, as it incorporates these missions at its core.

We believe the GCM is a unique opportunity for a comprehensive, integrated approach to international migration, minimizing factors that exacerbate vulnerability at different stages. No country alone can successfully address the needs and challenges posed by migration.

Therefore, Portugal:

- advocated for multilateral approaches, based on solidarity and human rights within a rules-based international order;

- has promoted a strengthened cooperation with countries of origin and transit, as no migration strategy will be effective and lasting without this;

- believes that the governance of migratory movements means establishing clear and sustainable regular migration routes, tackling irregular migration and fighting against human trafficking networks.

Therefore, Portugal was one of the first countries to adopt a **National Implementation Plan of the GCM**, based on a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach.

Its governance model proved to be effective also in the **response to the COVID-19** pandemic, by helping to put in place measures to mitigate the negative impacts of the crisis. Among these are granting temporary residency rights to all immigrants and asylum seekers, therefore ensuring their access to social and health benefits.

In fact, COVID-19 did not stop our efforts to implement the GCM. We rearranged our commitments and mobilized to minimize the negative impact on migrants. In doing so, we aimed to protect human rights and shape a more inclusive and organised method to address future crises.

Portugal actively participated in the **Regional Review of the GCM** for the UNECE region, earlier this month. It was a pioneering and unique opportunity to learn of the experiences of Member States and other stakeholders in a transparent and inclusive discussion. Commitments to the GCM were reinforced. We trust that it set a positive tone for the incoming regional reviews and for the IMRF in 2022.

Portugal is proud to be a **“champion country” of the GCM**, an initiative that involves countries from all regions. We hope to see it expanding, with the valuable support of the UN Migration Network. We are confident that it will

build on the positive examples to date, strengthen peer-to-peer learning and boost the Compact.

We also contributed to the **UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund** and have supported the **UN Migration Network** with unearmarked contributions.

Finally, looking ahead to the **Portuguese Presidency of the European Council**, in the first half of 2021, Portugal reaffirms the goal of making Europe more inclusive and equitable and is determined to uphold the principles of solidarity and responsibility, to respect fully the human rights of migrants and refugees.

I thank you