

STATEMENT BY TURKEY
111th IOM COUNCIL

Mr. Chairman,
Mr. Director General,
Excellencies,

At the outset, let me congratulate you, Mr. Chairman and new Bureau members on your election, and convey our gratitude to your distinguished predecessor, His Excellency Ambassador Jespersen of Denmark, for his efforts and valuable guidance.

Let me also take this opportunity to welcome the Russian Federation as the newest member of IOM as well as Malaysia as the new observer.

Mr. Chairman,

This year, all aspects of human life have been challenged dramatically with the Covid-19 pandemic.

Given the severity and the global nature of the pandemic, Turkey, on her own capacity as well, took early action in extending help to others and has been able to respond the call for support from 158 countries and 8 international organizations across the world.

Migrants and displaced people, however, have remained as one of the most affected from the pandemic in various ways.

In this regard, we commend the IOM's timely involvement and support to migrants and migrant-hosting countries.

It demonstrated that as the leading UN organization on migration, IOM's expertise and endeavors for the benefit of all migrants as well as the countries of origin, transit and destination are of importance more than ever.

Especially, IOM's focus on migration discourse and all kinds of discrimination including xenophobia has been crucial.

We believe that more work should be done to address this problem by broadening the perspective beyond Covid-19.

Mr. Chairman,

Turkey is at the axis of major migratory routes from Middle East and Asia to Europe.

We have been the largest refugee-hosting country in the world for the last 6 years with over 4 million refugees and today, our expenditures for refugees exceeded 40 billion dollars.

We have maintained utmost sensitivity in protecting the basic human rights of these people and have taken every measure to reduce the impacts of the pandemic on them.

We have continued to provide services such as decent accommodation, health, education (including distance-learning programs) and access to labor market.

However, host and transit countries should not be expected to shoulder the whole burden alone, especially in these difficult times.

Despite the travel restrictions in-force, we already observe a significant rise in human mobility towards our borders compared to few months ago and international community should realize that attempting to stop migrants in the transit countries do not work.

We cannot address these challenges with short-sighted policies.

Nor can we resort to illegal methods such as push-backs or denying the right to asylum.

Protecting lives and dignity of migrants should always come first and there can never be a legitimate reason for violating their rights.

The only way out from these challenges is genuine international cooperation and implementing a migration management policy based on addressing root causes, increasing regular pathways and respecting migrant rights.

Mr. Chairman,

Turkey's collaboration with IOM covers many areas such as migration management, assisted voluntary returns, counter trafficking and migrant smuggling, integration, humanitarian assistance, migrant protection.

We believe that all our joint efforts have strengthened migration management in Turkey and contributed to the migration knowledge of IOM.

On this occasion, we reiterate once again our support for IOM and appreciate Director General Vitorino's leadership and look forward to continuing our comprehensive cooperation.

Thank you.