

**Ambassador Andrew Bremberg Remarks to the 111th Session of the IOM Council
As recorded for delivery via video on November 23, 2020**

Director General Vitorino, Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates:

2020 has been fraught with unprecedented challenges – most notably the COVID-19 pandemic that has affected every one of us, and which serves as a sharp reminder of our interconnectedness, and of the value of strong, reliable partners. IOM has risen to the occasion in the face of these challenges.

The United States recognizes IOM as a critical partner in humanitarian emergencies, including its efforts to address humanitarian needs stemming from the pandemic. At the same time, IOM has demonstrated the need to look ahead, urging us all to consider how we can support recovery around the globe and how we can better position the organization for success.

Although we are still in the midst of this pandemic, I want to commend the adaptability and flexibility that IOM has demonstrated in the last year, to recognize the resilience of IOM staff and member states, and to appreciate the accomplishments we have all realized by working together toward common goals.

IOM member states found new ways to work together, consulting and collaborating from a distance, and coming together to approve the first amendments to the IOM Constitution in 20 years to strengthen IOM's senior leadership structures.

We hope these changes at the top of the organization are just the beginning, and that IOM will continue to reevaluate its structures and to consult with member states so we can – together – ensure the organization is working as efficiently and effectively as possible.

IOM member states and the IOM administration must continue in this spirit of collaboration to pursue the reforms outlined in the IOM Internal Governance Framework to strengthen management and oversight functions. This includes continued attention and funding to solidify the gains made reinforcing its internal justice systems, while also beginning work to modernize IOM's operational systems by implementing the Business Transformation workstream. Supporting sufficient independent investigatory capacity to examine claims of fraud and abuse is a fundamental underpinning of any organization and must remain a focus.

In addition, as a field-based and operationally-focused organization, IOM's transformation efforts will only succeed if field staff, most notably those working in emergency response, are part of the design process providing input and insight to ensure IOM reform efforts support the organization's flexibility and responsiveness in humanitarian action.

In 2020, the United States once again provided earmarked and unearmarked contributions to the IOM administration to support these valuable institutional initiatives, and we encourage other states to consider how they might also support these efforts.

While we recognize the efforts IOM has made over the last year to implement internal justice reform, including efforts to strengthen the Office of the Inspector General and Legal Advisor, recent reports of alleged sexual exploitation and abuse by humanitarian actors in the Democratic Republic of the Congo serve as a grim reminder that there is much more work to be done.

We urge IOM to consider how its operations around the globe can better recognize risks of violence against women and girls, including sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, and take proactive action to mitigate, reduce, and address this risk for their staff and the populations they serve.

Mr. Chairman,

The United States has been a strong supporter of IOM since it was established in 1951. The preamble to IOM's Constitution acknowledges the need to ensure orderly migration, and this is as true today as it was in 1951. We appreciate IOM as a strategic partner working with every member state in different ways to advance shared goals of legal, orderly, and safe migration, and we look forward to working closely with other member states to achieve the goal of a stronger and more enduring organization.

Thank you.