



THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

STATEMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA AT THE 111TH SESSION OF THE IOM COUNCIL, 24-27 NOVEMBER, 2020 GENERAL DEBATE

Thank you Chair,

Uganda aligns itself with the statement made by Niger on behalf of the African Group. We join delegations that have spoken before us to congratulate you and other members of the Bureau on your election to lead us in this session. We have no doubt that your wise leadership will steer this session to a successful conclusion.

Uganda thanks the Director General of IOM for the presentation of his report. We commend him for highlighting the important work that the IOM continues to do in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the challenges which remain and require our collective effort to overcome. The challenges we face have emphasized further the important role the implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration could play in this regard.

Uganda has taken steps to implement the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. We have made some progress in establishing legal frameworks for regular and safe migration. However, even with such efforts migrants were not sufficiently shielded from the harsh impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many migrants lost their jobs because of the pandemic but at the same time could not return to their countries of origin because of border restrictions.

Other migrants were left with no option but to return home through negotiated but limited easing of border restrictions. This situation puts into question the notion of voluntary return as has been traditionally understood. Having returned to countries of origin without reintegration support, migrants face an uncertain future with no guarantees of livelihoods and limited prospects of readmission in destination countries. Over the last months we have witnessed the vulnerability of migrants and people on the move in all parts of the world and therefore there can be no better time than now for renewed commitment to international cooperation in this regard.

Today advances in science with regard to treatments for and vaccines against COVID-19 have given us hope for a return to normalcy and economic recovery. Our call is for

migrants to be included in economic recovery programs as they also are contributors to the economic and social development of the societies in which they reside.

We note the positive impact of IOM's use of virtual technologies to offer social support services to the concerned persons in need but due consideration should continue to be made for those who have limited access to such technologies. This is especially important in the less developed parts of the world.

Uganda commends the IOM for its comprehensive approach that seeks to harness and build on the contributions of regional and subregional organizations. We are gratified with the collaboration of IOM with the African Union and NEPAD in the establishment of frameworks for African continental movement of essential goods and medical supplies in the midst of the pandemic induced travel restrictions.

We look forward to the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between IOM and GAVI aimed at ensuring that migrants get equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines when they become available. Indeed, if vaccination is a way out of this global crisis, then no one should be left behind. We welcome IOM's commitment to support governments to ensure that immunizations against COVID-19 includes migrants and other people on the move. Uganda is ready to cooperate with IOM in this regard.

Data collection remains a challenge in our national efforts to manage migration. The development and launching of the Continental Strategy for Africa 2020-2024 is a positive step in our continental efforts towards collecting and disseminating the crucial data, on the root causes and patterns of migration in Africa. We are committed to working closely with IOM to implement this strategy.

Finally, Uganda congratulates and welcomes Russia as a member and Malaysia as an observer to this important Organization.

I thank you Chair.