

**Zimbabwe's statement for the general debate at the 111<sup>th</sup> session of the IOM Council: 24 to 27 November 2020 delivered by Mr P.T. Chigiji Charge d'Affaires a.i. Zimbabwe Permanent Mission to the United Nations and other International Organisations in Geneva**

**Mr President**

**The Director-General Mr Antonio Vitorino**

**Hon Ministers here present**

**Your Excellencies**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

Zimbabwe aligns itself with the statement made by Niger on behalf of the Africa group and wishes to congratulate you and the other bureau members for your election to lead the council for the next 12 months. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted negatively on how governance meetings are organised but you can be rest assured of Zimbabwe's support and co-operation during your term of office.

Zimbabwe would also like to congratulate the Director General for the comprehensive report he presented at the opening of this council session. The report covers a number of pertinent issues especially the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on mobility and migration, governance and the implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly & Regular Migration.

Mr President, millions of migrants have lost their jobs in the wake of the lockdowns imposed by some of the host countries in mitigating the pandemic. Mobility in general has been curtailed through restrictions and conditions for entry in some countries. This also affected close to 3 million migrants that were either in transit or elected to return to their countries of origin. The organisation's support to stranded returnees across the world and its working relationship with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees in dealing with mixed migration flows are acknowledged.

Zimbabwe agrees with the Director-General's observations that the pandemic has provided us with an opportunity to reshape the migration landscape to respond to the changing labour markets and circumstances in host countries. It is therefore possible, through our collective efforts to build back better to ensure that international migration contributes to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

Mr President, Zimbabwe has taken note of the Director General's observations and comments on the implementation by member states of the GCM before and during the pandemic. The pandemic has affected the implementation of some the GCM programmes notably the regional and inter-regional ones.

However, the pandemic itself is a wakeup call for many member states that are signatories to the GCM to act on some of the facets of migration that were not prioritised. One such aspect that has not received due attention is the conclusion of bilateral labour agreements between sending and receiving countries, with clear rights and protection clauses to guarantee decent work for migrants.

Going forward, Zimbabwe is to prioritise this aspect and will be seeking technical support from the IOM and other relevant agencies within the UN Network on Migration such as the ILO. It is for this reason that Zimbabwe calls upon the Director General to ensure that the much-needed expertise is available in the field.

At the same time Zimbabwe urges the Director General to adequately resource the country offices so that they can better articulate all migration issues within the framework of the United Nations Country Teams. In this regard, Zimbabwe appreciates the ongoing discussions on budget reform in general and on flexibility in the management of internal and project resources in particular to increase efficiency and effectiveness.

Mr President, Zimbabwe appreciates IOM's support to its COVID- 19 National Response and Recovery Plan. For example, the organisation is complementing the government's health responses to the pandemic especially at the ports of entry. More importantly, the organisation is rendering various forms of support to the returnees who have lost their jobs as a result of the lockdowns in the host countries. So far, IOM has supported the return of over 25 600 migrants mainly from Zimbabwe's neighbouring countries. In addition, the Government of Zimbabwe appreciates IOM's continued support to the communities that were affected by the 2019 Cyclone Idai, as well as by the 2019/2020 drought.

Zimbabwe looks forward to working with the IOM during the implementation of its National Development Strategy 1 (2021-2025) that was launched on 16 November 2020 by His Excellency President Emmerson Mnangagwa. One area outlined in the framework that requires support from the IOM, and is also integral to the GCM, is the improvement of diaspora participation in national development.

Finally, Mr President, Zimbabwe would like to congratulate the Russia Federation for joining the IOM, as well as Malaysia for assuming observer status in the organisation.

**I thank you**