

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation is honoured to deliver this statement on behalf of the Arab Group.

As countries of origin, transit, destination and return, the member States of the Arab Group affirm their strong interest in the sound management of international migration. The past decade has witnessed a remarkable increase in the movement of people within the Arab region, as a result of political instability and deteriorating economic conditions among other drivers. This underscores the urgent need for the peaceful settlement of all conflicts in the region, as well as addressing other root causes, particularly poverty and unemployment.

To add to an already complex situation, the COVID-19 pandemic has had huge implications for international migration. Migrant workers were among the first to lose their jobs, while millions were stranded due to border closures. Many migrants faced racism, xenophobia and stigmatization. While the vaccine rollout is currently underway, there is still a long way to go to guarantee equitable access and to leave no-one behind. The Group would therefore like to emphasise the importance of achieving vaccine equity and including migrants in all responses to the pandemic, as well as promoting a positive discourse on migration to combat intolerance and xenophobia.

The Arab Group takes note of the Director-General's report on the activities of the Organization during this challenging period, including its work in a number of humanitarian crises. We also welcome the outcome of the Working Group on IOM Partnerships, Governance and Organizational Priorities, and look forward to continuing our engagement in the Working Group on Budget Reform with a view to improving IOM's funding model to allow it to meet increasingly complex challenges. We are pleased that as we celebrate IOM's 70th Anniversary, an important reform has already been implemented in the top management of the Organisation and welcome the assumption of the two new Deputies Director General of their new roles.

The Group also supports the Director General's ambitious reform agenda, intended to make the Organisation fit for purpose, taking into consideration its increased responsibilities following the adoption of the Global Compact on Migration. We note the importance of continued commitment by IOM's leadership to ensuring efficiency, transparency, and accountability including through strengthening the Internal Governance Framework.

The Arab Group - the majority of whose members adopted the GCM in Marrakech on 10 December 2018 - reaffirms the importance of implementing the GCM, in accordance with national priorities. We welcome the regional review for the Middle East and North Africa which took place in February 2021, and look forward to the first International Migration Review Forum in May 2022. In this context, allow us to thank the IOM for its role as Coordinator of the UN Network on Migration, and to thank the DG and Secretariat for their important role as the leading organization in the field of migration in the UN system.

Finally, the Arab Group would like to recall its request to add Arabic as an official language of the Organization in line with UN-wide standards and practice, especially in light of IOM's accession to the UN in 2016. With the steadily increasing cooperation between members of the Arab region and IOM we look forward to ensuring equitable geographical representation and continued engagement with the region's priorities.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.