

**ESTONIA**  
**Statement delivered by Mr. Andres Rundu**  
**Deputy Foreign Minister**  
**at the IOM COUNCIL 112th session**  
**(29 November – 1 December 2021)**

Thank you Mr Chair,

Estonia aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union on behalf of its Member States.

I would like to start with welcoming the Chair of the 112th Council and express Estonia's full support to your work. I also thank the Director-General for his statement and the update on current activities.

I appreciate this opportunity to continue the discussion on IOM's work and important topics in our common interest.

Mr Chair,

First, although we mark the Organization's 70th anniversary, we sadly have to conclude that with ever-higher forced displacement levels, the work of IOM is now more relevant than ever. Estonia much appreciates IOM's dedication and work it has been doing for 70 years. Yet the situation world-wide is worrisome. We are deeply concerned about the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan, as well as in ongoing conflicts in Syria, Ethiopia and Yemen, which all force people to leave their homes. Moreover, climate change is increasingly a driver for displacement and it is important that we, states tackle climate change before it is late. IOM plays the key role in assisting migrants in need and in providing opportunities for solutions such as voluntary, safe and dignified return. We commend IOM's staff commitment in providing support and response worldwide, including in remote and conflict-affected areas.

Second, thank you for raising the issue of human mobility in the context of global pandemics. We agree that the COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally reshaped migration, health and border management landscape. And it is our role as States to find solutions and to respond in a way that does not further broaden existing inequalities, which would stall future economic and social development in some parts of the world and for a large part of the global population. We must emphasise the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on the most vulnerable - women, children, elderly persons and persons with disabilities, and we need to protect them from any form of discrimination or abuse. Migrants need to be a part of the global goal of vaccinating 70% of the world's population by mid-2021.

Third, we remain highly concerned about the wellbeing of migrants stranded along the EU's external border. Furthermore, we also strongly condemn the orchestrated instrumentalisation of human beings, whose lives and wellbeing have been put in danger for political purposes. International organisations need to be provided with immediate and unhindered access to people in need to deliver humanitarian assistance and to assist with voluntary, safe and dignified returns. Purposefully generated and politically motivated migratory movements is a form of hybrid attack against States and such use of vulnerable people endangers migrants' lives and should, therefore, not be tolerated.

On a different note, we much welcome the continued efforts of IOM with regards to its reform agenda. We are also glad that IOM has been undertaking consultations with Member States and partners on developing the Legal Identity Strategy. Trusted legal identity is the way forward to achieve respect for human rights and privacy for mobile populations, which has become even more urgent within the COVID situation. Without proof of identity, such as an ID card, fundamental rights and services become hampered. IOM plays a very important role here, including in assisting and advising migrants and partners on responsible use of new technologies.

Finally, Estonia commends IOM one more time for its tireless efforts to deal with the global challenges but also enforce the positive opportunities that migration and human mobility bring about on a global as well as regional scale. We reassure our support to IOM in its endeavour to ensure humane and orderly management of migration.

We highly value the good bilateral cooperation with IOM and with its country office in Estonia that has supported us in providing civic orientation courses for beneficiaries of international protection for the past few years. We value and thank IOM for the expertise and support it has provided us in assisting with voluntary returns and reintegration of third-country nationals.

We sincerely hope for the continuance of our fruitful cooperation with IOM and wish the organisation every success in your endeavours in the years to come.

Thank you for your attention.