
**International Organization for Migrations
112th Session Council**

Item 12- General Debate

Delivered by Amb. Meirav Eilon Shahar
Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations in Geneva

Madam Chairperson,

At the outset, I would like to congratulate you on your election as Chairperson of this Council. I wish you and the rest of the Bureau all the success for the upcoming year.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Amb. García for his work during this year. During his term in office, we have made some important institutional progress.

I would like to welcome the two new Deputy Director Generals to this Council. Moreover, let me extend our recognition to the Director General, and through him, to all IOM staff for their strong commitment to protecting migrants and their hard work during this challenging time.

Madam Chairperson,

This year's Council marks the 70th Anniversary of the Organization. 70 years later, IOM's work is even more important than before. Israel is a proud member of IOM, and it stands ready to support its work.

Madam Chairperson,

The challenges that migrants typically suffer have deepened in the face of the COVID- 19 pandemic. This population will often not seek medical care due to fear of the authorities, unfamiliarity with the rules, and lack of money or health insurance.

Therefore, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Israel took several measures to mitigate some of these challenges. For example, authorities in Israel instructed hospitals and other medical facilities in the country to allow testing and treatment of persons staying in Israel regardless of their migratory or similar status, without payment and without any risk of detention.

Madam Chairperson,

I would like to thank Director General Vitorino for his report. In that regard, we would like to address some points related to what the DG called “institutional commitments” during the last SCPF.

Regarding disability inclusion, we are aware of the development of e-learning tools and the current work to develop policies on reasonable accommodation and accessibility guidelines. We welcome the work to collect specific data on disabilities as part of the Displacement

Tracking Matrix. We encourage OIM to further its efforts in this regard.

We also welcome the work on preventing sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment, including the creation of a specific unit. In this line, we align ourselves with the Joint Statement delivered by the Netherlands on behalf of the Geneva Group of Friends to Eliminate Sexual Harassment.

Moreover, we welcome the efforts to promote gender equality and diversity within the Organization and look forward to receiving updates on the review of the gender strategy. I would, however, like to request the Administration to ensure that its work to promote diversity and combat discrimination is reflected in the reports presented to this Council. The recognition of diversity, including with regards to sexual orientation and gender identity, when referring both to IOM staff and the migrants that this Organization protects, is key to ensuring equality and non-discrimination. To put it in simple terms, diversity exists, whether it is mentioned in a paragraph or not. Denial of its existence only serves to discriminate further a group of our society, staff, or people we are called to protect.

I thank you, Madam Chairperson.