

Draft

**National Statement in celebration of the 70th anniversary of the IOM
and 112th IOM Council**

29 November to 1 December 2021

Pleasantries

Thank you Chair for the opportunity to address this body during this important occasion - the 70th anniversary of the IOM, and the start of the 112th IOM Council.

I take this opportunity to also congratulate the Bureau of the 112th IOM Council, to convey my sincerest appreciation to the delegation of Mexico for the excellent collaboration over the years, to express my best wishes to the new President, my good friend Permanent Representative of Costa Rica, Ambassador Catalina Devandas, and to give my warm regards to His Excellency Ambassador Taeho Lee of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea, who replaces the Philippines in the Bureau, and to the delegation of the Republic of Korea, which assumes the role of Coordinator for the Asia Pacific Group today.

It has been a fulfilling journey in the Council Bureau. In the four sessions that I have been able to take part in the Bureau's work, we have

seen the Council as a whole put down the foundations for the reformed, fit for purpose, effective and efficient IOM that we all want to see.

We have changed the way that the Deputy Director General is selected – and now have DDG Amy Pope and DDG Ugochi Daniels to help carry the load of implementing the mandate of this organization.

As a Council, we have formalized the regional groupings for the IOM, creating an IOM model for regional organization. We have also seen through some modest Budget Reform processes together, though we must leave the bulk of this Sisyphean task to our stalwart leaders in the newly elected Bureau.

Since 2018, the Philippine delegation has served as coordinator for the Asia Pacific Group. To my colleagues in the APG, allow me to say that it has been an honor to serve in this capacity. The trust your delegations have placed in our hands to shape and define the APG, to craft modalities for the consultative work, and to facilitate an orderly rotation. I leave this APG in your good hands, Ambassador Lee, and I am sure your delegation is fully up to the task of further elaborating what the APG is and can do for the IOM.

Philippines in the IOM

The relationship of the Philippines with the IOM is decades old. The Philippines has hosted the IOM Office in Manila since 1975. It was initially a functional relationship for our government with the IOM, since the 1970s marked the first wave of managed labor migration in the history of Philippine diaspora. With very brief ebbs, that wave has continued on – and so has our relationship with the IOM. In 1988, the relationship was formalized when we became a Member State of the IOM.

With every year and decade since, our relations with the IOM have grown in scope and depth, at all levels, national, regional and global.

The Philippines hosts the Manila Administrative Center; the IOM Country Office has a great relationship with the Department of Foreign Affairs, among other agencies; the regional office is headed by a compatriot, Dr. Nenette Motus; here in Geneva, Director General Vitorino is perhaps the only head of organization I have on speed-dial and with whom I have spoken with regularly – with or without a crisis on our doorstep.

If relations were determined just by the frequency of our interactions, then the IOM would surely be one of the most significant multilateral portfolios for the Philippines.

Our faith in this organization is firm. The IOM remains high on the priority list for voluntary financial contributions for the Philippine Government despite our modest resources. Some years we are able to contribute more than on other years, but the regularity of that commitment is set. We know that that faith is reciprocated, in the trust that the IOM has given the Philippines and its capacity to advocate as a GCM Champion, to advise as a member of the Steering Committee of the Migration MPTF, to coordinate as a host country for the MAC, and to articulate as a pilot country for countless programs that need real-world demonstration projects to come to fruition.

Calls to Action

As I said the Philippines is a GCM Champion country and in the next six months we will work with regional and global partners, assisted of course by the UN Network on Migration, to articulate our advocacies, to prepare for the first International Migration Review Forum in May 2022.

The Philippines believes that the GCM offers sound, human rights based, objectives to make migration governance and implementation work in the interest of all countries and all migrants regardless of status, and is of the view that all countries, no matter where they may be on the spectrum of

support for the GCM, can participate in the IMRF, and we do hope that indeed every Member State of the UN does partake in the discourse.

We cannot do enough to protect and promote the interests of the most vulnerable, and it is undeniable that people on the move can be counted among them.

A particular vulnerability is xenophobia and the negative narratives on migrants, arising from crisis, whether it is the COVID19 pandemic or climate change. The negative imagery some political actors have ascribed to people on the move is disappointing, given the positive contributions migrants have made toward sustainable development, and even toward the recovery from COVID19, healthcare and homecare workers being one of the most in demand categories for low-skilled, skilled and professional work, needs that have increasingly been filled by migrants.

Some economies have been able to start a recovery, and those that have done so by making migrants part of the solution are making strides in the right direction. While we are not out of the woods in this pandemic, and the journey is just beginning as regards climate change, I believe that if we can truly put into practice what we mean by leaving no one behind and make migration policy a part of the equation, I am certain that we will be closer to a solution to these great problems we collectively face.

Closing

Excellencies, Director General, Deputy Directors General, the IOM at 70 is an organization with a wider reach, larger mandate, and has the capacity for greater contribution to humanity, than was perhaps envisioned when it was first created as a logistics operation in 1951.

Now with 174 Member States and 8 Observers, the recognition of the IOM as the leader in migration discourse is nearly universal. The Philippines stands with you, as it has for decades, as the IOM grows even further.

Thank you Chair.