

**IOM - 112TH SESSION OF THE COUNCIL
THE HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT
STATEMENT BY VICE-MINISTER OF INTERIOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF
LITHUANIA**

**THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON BORDERS, MIGRATION AND
MOBILITY: LEARNING LESSONS AND PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE**

Thank you, Chair,

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my honour to participate here today and to address you on behalf of Lithuania.

Lithuania fully aligns with the statement of the European Union and its Member States.

The topic of today's high-level meeting is particularly relevant.

The COVID-19 pandemic, which has affected the whole world and all areas of our lives, is not yet over.

We developed effective instruments to control the spread of the virus, vaccines being a most important one.

Lithuania, like many countries in the world, provides vaccination not only to its citizens, but also to the migrants, including asylum seekers.

However, we must continue our effort in this regard and monitor the situation closely.

The pandemic had and will continue to have an indisputable impact on migration.

When COVID-19 became part of our reality, many countries sought ways to contain the spread of the virus and to respond appropriately to the very dynamic evolution of the situation.

Travel restrictions between states and even within the countries became one of the measures to mitigate the impact of the pandemic.

Inevitably, the effort to curb the spread of the disease has posed new challenges to migration processes.

Travel restrictions, quarantine have affected tourism, labour migration and asylum systems, and, consequently - many human destinies.

[I would like to highlight that] Despite the pandemic situation in past 2 years, our resettlement and relocation efforts were continued, although in a slower pace.

[6 persons in need of international protection were transferred to Lithuania: 5 Syrian citizens from Jordan and 1 Afghan citizen (unaccompanied minor) from Greece.

In 2021, 2 unaccompanied minors were relocated from Greece, 12 persons from Italy, 2 persons from Malta as well as 17 Eritrean citizens were resettled from an Ethiopian refugee camp.

In addition, in 2021, Lithuania has evacuated and resettled 179 Afghan citizens from Afghanistan].

I am glad that the global community has found ways to gradually ease the restrictions.

Chair, Distinguished Delegates,

The improvement of the global epidemiological situation has not only led to good winds in migration.

Regrettably, along with pandemic-related challenges, the year of 2021 is also marked with a challenge of artificially created and orchestrated irregular migratory inflow for the purposes of exerting political pressure.

The global community must not and cannot tolerate instrumentalisation of irregular migration or other forms of hybrid attacks.

I would like to use this opportunity and express words of gratitude for the support of IOM to the Lithuanian authorities facing an unprecedented migratory pressure.

Also, please allow me to commend the efforts of IOM to help to those misled and deceived people, who irregularly arrived to Lithuania this year, and were assisted by the IOM to safely return home.

Excellences,

The past two years were particularly generous with lessons.

We have learned a lot about the management of the pandemic, about addressing the hybrid threats, about reinforcing our border protection and internal security, but at the same time – about not forgetting the vulnerable people and the ones in need of protection.

These lessons learnt make us stronger and more resilient to the possible future challenges.

I thank you.