



Statement by the Hon. Evarist Bartolo, Minister for Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Malta for the High-Level Segment of the 112th Session of the IOM Council.

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Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

At a time when migrants are demonised and weaponised, it is more important than ever to celebrate the International Organization for Migration and the values it has advocated for 70 years that migrants are to be treated as human beings with human rights.

In Malta, the smallest member of the European Union, in the middle between Africa and Europe we can only do so much. Every thousand who enter Malta is like million entering the European Union. We certainly do not want people to drown in the Mediterranean (over 23,000 have drowned since 2014) but nor can we welcome all the thousands that traffickers send in our direction from Libya.

We are already doing much more than others. Between 2015 and 2018, in relation to its size and resources, Malta was the country that provided most asylum (2,922) in the EU to those refugees fleeing from war and persecution. In the last 16 years, our European partners took only 10% of the 25,000 that had arrived in Malta.

When it comes to irregular migration, we need to secure borders and fight human traffickers in sending, transit and destination countries; grant asylum to those who qualify for it, treating all migrants with human dignity and without racial or religious prejudice.

We need effective training and funding schemes to reintegrate returned irregular migrants in sustainable business activity in their countries of origin.



We must address the root causes of migration. UNCTAD estimates that EUR 76 billion (4% of the Continent's GDP) leave Africa illicitly every year to rob it of the funds needed for infrastructure, power supply, water, universal access to health, education, and broadband internet service. There are over four million African migrants in Europe and 25 million migrants in Africa, making African countries also transit and countries of destination.

In 2020, 70% of goods from EU to Africa were manufactured goods. Over 61% of goods from Africa to the EU were primary goods. Perpetuating these asymmetrical trade exchanges

inhibits the growth of indigenous manufacturing and services sectors in Africa, needed to create the necessary jobs in this continent where 60% of its 1.3 billion people are under 25.

The African Development Bank says that while 10 to 12 million African youth enter the workforce each year, only 3 million jobs are created, leaving vast numbers of youth unemployed. Thousands of skilled and qualified graduates leave Africa for Europe. Africa's brain drain is Europe's brain gain as it harvests the entrepreneurial and innovative energy and talents of the migrants.

Unless these trends (compounded by the income gap between Europe and Africa, conflicts and climate change) are reversed, more young Africans will seek a better life elsewhere. Europe and Africa must work together as equal partners to create this better life.

Thank you.

*Check against delivery*