

ESTONIA

Statement delivered by Ms Katrin Saarsalu-Layachi

Ambassador of Estonia

at the IOM COUNCIL 113th session

(29 November – 2 December 2022)

Chair, Director General, Excellencies and Distinguished Delegates,

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

I would like to thank the Director-General for his statement and the update on IOM's current activities.

Estonia appreciates IOM's growing role as a global leader on migration and an irreplaceable partner in the international humanitarian system. We strongly count on IOM's vast experience and the network of missions and dedicated experts on the ground.

This year, we come together in the face of grievous challenges as armed conflict; violence; persecution; climate change; economic uncertainty; and food insecurity are all on the rise. The humanitarian situation world-wide, including with reference to migrants and internally displaced persons around the globe, is deeply concerning. This demands new solutions, such as innovative projects joining humanitarian, development and peace efforts, as well as anticipatory action and resilience building.

Closer to us, Russia's unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine has led to the worst refugee and humanitarian crisis in Europe since the Second World War. Over 7 million people are currently internally displaced in Ukraine and more than 7.5 million have fled the country, most of them women and children. The impact of the Russian aggression reaches much further, causing energy crisis and rise in food insecurity and food prices all around the world, being particularly harsh on already fragile countries. Only through international cooperation have we

managed to mitigate the destabilising effect of the war on the global food markets. We must not forget that as long as Russia is continuing the war of aggression, the illegal annexations of Ukrainian regions and the violation of international law, global security is at risk.

Estonia commends IOM for supporting the protection and transit of Ukrainian citizens and residents, and providing acute, life-saving support on the ground. Estonia is doing its part to help and share the burden. To date, Estonia has sent an estimated 23 million EUR in humanitarian aid to Ukraine. We are currently hosting a number of Ukrainian refugees equal to more than 4.7% of our population

At the same time, the challenging situation of irregular migrants in the world remains a high concern for us. It demands making the very best use of our resources to be able to assist the most vulnerable in need. A holistic approach to migration management is essential to avoid the situation where irregular migrants' lives are put in danger or lost. Estonia prioritises addressing the root causes of migration, facilitating return and reintegration, creating favourable living conditions at home, fighting against smuggling and human trafficking as vital elements of a comprehensive approach. Furthermore, we need to develop new and enhance the existing partnerships with countries of origin and transit for migration.

Let me conclude by reiterating Estonia's appreciation and support for the vital role and work of IOM. I want to salute IOM staff for their dedication and professionalism and we look forward to continuing our cooperation.

Thank you for your attention.