PERMANENT MISSION OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF TIMOR-LESTE
TO THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN GENEVA

General Debate
113th Session of IOM Council
1 December 2022

3 Minutes

Chairperson,
Director-General,
Distinguished delegates,

At the outset, I wish to congratulate you (Ambassador Lansana Gberie, the Permanent Representative of Sierra Leone) as the new Chairperson of the IOM Council and congratulate also the newly elected Bureau Members.

Mr. Chair,

Addressing the multifaceted issues related to migration is an area of priority for the Government of Timor-Leste. Many Timorese emigrate abroad for studies and employment opportunities, and at the same time, Timor-Leste is also a destination country for a considerable number of immigrants. Consequently, the Government has undertaken efforts to strengthen its migration policies, aiming to ensure that migration is voluntary, regular, safe, and orderly.

The government estimated that currently there are 50,000 Timorese nationals living abroad or amounting to 3.7% of the country's total population. Thus, recognizing the need to have a comprehensive diaspora engagement to address the layered impacts that Timorese communities abroad have in both the wellbeing of Timor-Leste and the continued wellbeing of Timorese people abroad, the Government in collaboration with the IOM developed the first Timor-Leste National Diaspora Engagement Policy for 2023-2027. Timor-Leste looks forward to continuing the cooperation we have with our partners, including the IOM, UNDP, and WHO for the successful implementation of the Policy.

Moreover, to further strengthen the Government's engagement with the Timorese Communities abroad, the Government also established in July 2022, a Secretary of State for Timorese Communities in the structure of the VIII Constitutional Government that responds directly to the Prime Minister.

Mr. Chair,

One critical issue for the Government of Timor-Leste in relation to migration is to combat human trafficking in international migration. In this respect, the Government ratified relevant critical Conventions, adopted legislation, and engaged actively in regional cooperation, such as the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime, in order to safeguard and protect the rights of migrants.

Recently, the Government of Timor-Leste was faced with a challenge when many Timorese youths fell victim to human trafficking which led them to difficult situations abroad. In response to this, the Government adopted a Decree-Law that will allow for the Government to take measures to streamline actions to protect its citizens abroad, including providing them with critical support and repatriation. The Government continues to undertake efforts to address the situation, and we are grateful for the support we have received from our key partners, including from Portugal and the IOM.

I wish to highlight that our collaboration with the IOM dated back to 1999, even before Timor-Leste restored its independence on 20 May 2002. Since then, the cooperation has grown even stronger with collaboration in different areas, such as support in combating human trafficking through the Inter-Agency Trafficking Group, in developing coherent and well-coordinated migration management systems, and in supporting institutional strengthening to prepare and respond to natural disasters.

Recently, with generous support from Australia, the IOM assisted Timor-Leste in modernizing the country's border management and governance, through the launch of the IOM-developed MIDAS as the new Border Management Information System. We are convinced that the new system would enhance accountable and effective border governance in Timor-Leste.

In concluding, I wish to underscore that Timor-Leste supports efforts to strengthen the work of the IOM, including through the Reform of the IOM Budget under the leadership of Director-General Antonio Vitorino and his team, and we look forward to continuing our cooperation with the IOM.

Thank you.