

**IOM Council**  
**114<sup>th</sup> Session, 27-29 November 2023**  
**Agenda item 10 General debate**  
**Statement by Bulgaria**

Distinguished chairperson,  
Distinguished Director- General Pope,  
Distinguished delegates,

I also, like previous speakers, welcome Director- General Pope at the helm of this still young but already very progressive and dynamic humanitarian organization. We wish full success to her endeavours, to keep the achievements so far and to build on them to improve even further the IOM's governance, strategic planning and efficiency.

Bulgaria aligns with the EU statement.

I would also like to thank the Director-General for her report highlighting the challenges of international migration and the negative impact on migration of overlapping global crises, poverty, health emergencies, climate change and food insecurity. We fully support the IOM people-centered approach.

We are particularly concerned about the continued war of aggression of Russia on Ukraine and its humanitarian impact on the people of Ukraine and neighboring countries and we align with the joint cross-regional statement delivered by Ukraine. We express our concern with the deepening humanitarian crisis in Gaza and the emerging need of safe access for humanitarian aid on the ground. We also condemn the abominable terrorist attacks by Hamas against Israel. We deplore all loss of civilian lives in Gaza and Israel and recall once again the obligation of all parties to respect and ensure respect for international humanitarian law.

The continued life-saving engagement of IOM with protracted crises such as in Afghanistan, Syria, Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo and other is of importance and has a moral effect on people on the ground giving them hope that they are not forgotten.

Further operationalization of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus is most needed nowadays than ever to find durable solutions through coordinated national and international efforts and to deliver a viable outcome for the future generations and the humanity as a whole. We welcome in that regard the IOM readiness to focus on the humanitarian relief of the people it serves but also on building solutions for them, helping people to remain and build their lives at home and not to be forced to move. The collection of reliable data is of importance in that regard and we support the approach of the Director General to rely on more, desegregated and action oriented data.

A flexible, adaptive, efficient and transparent IOM will be a reliable partner in that process and we count on the new Strategic Plan for 2024-2028 and the Internal Governance Framework 2.0 to be the tools that will steer the Organisation to this goal. The recent MOPAN assessment could inspire future workable solutions in that regard as well.

We expect the policy of zero tolerance to sexual exploitation, harassment and abuse to remain high on the IOM agenda under Director General Pope's leadership.

We welcome the continued IOM's efforts on localization and close engagement with local partners that are critical to the effective delivery of humanitarian assistance, including in hard-to-reach areas. The work with the private sector and its further involvement in the search of solutions is well perceived.

IOM remains our key partner at national level and we appreciated the very good cooperation with IOM country office in Bulgaria in essential areas such as return, support to victims of trafficking and unaccompanied minors. We count on you, Director-General, for ensuring the continued successful functioning of your Office in Sofia.