

## **ESTONIA**

**Statement delivered by Ms Riia Salsa-Audiffren**

**Ambassador of Estonia**

**at the IOM COUNCIL 114th session**

**(27 November – 29 November 2023)**

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 and with the cross-regional statement delivered by Ukraine.

Allow me to begin by stating that Estonia highly values the excellent work that IOM is doing worldwide and the cooperation that we have between IOM and Estonia. Furthermore, we congratulate Ms Amy Pope on her first IOM Council as the Director General of the organisation.

Especially during the times of crises and hardship such as we are witnessing today, the role of IOM as a provider of lifesaving support to so many cannot be underestimated.

As we are deeply distressed about the increase of people of concern to IOM around the world and the dire circumstances millions of people are facing, I want to focus on a continuously unfolding tragedy close to us. Russia's unprovoked and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine has lasted for 21 months. Ten million people have been forced to leave their homes to find safety. The work that IOM is doing to support the protection and transit of Ukrainian citizens and residents is invaluable. It is saving lives and its continuation is indispensable.

Estonia is doing its best to help by hosting Ukrainian refugees, by ensuring crucial humanitarian aid and launching reconstruction efforts, with a focus on civilian sites and infrastructure. The impact of the Russian aggression continues to reach much further, causing energy crisis and rise in food insecurity and food prices all around the world. Today, we are witnessing Russia's and Belarus's instrumentalisation of migrants as part of hybrid warfare against their neighbours. Only through international cooperation will we manage to mitigate the destabilising effect of the war.

Director General,

displacement and humanitarian needs in the world continue to rise due to multiple global crises, natural catastrophes, and climate change. At the last year's Council, we discussed the interlinkage between climate change, food insecurity, and migration, and called for a new approach. We need to apply the humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach to address the global challenges that we are facing. Estonia commends IOM for prioritising response to climate migration. Building resilience of communities and ensuring longer-term solutions remains the key in responding to the challenge of climate-induced migration.

In concluding, I would like to reiterate Estonia's appreciation and support for IOM's growing role as a global leader on migration and an irreplaceable partner in the international humanitarian system. I would like to thank the IOM leadership team and the staff for their dedication and professionalism.

Thank you for your attention.