

Mission Permanente  
de Tunisie à Genève



البعثة الدائمة للجمهورية  
التونسية بجنيف

**115<sup>th</sup> Session of IOM Council  
High-level debate:**

**Statement by HE. Mr. Mohamed Ali Nafti,  
Minister of Foreign Affairs, Migration and  
Tunisians Abroad**

**(check against delivery)**

**Madam Amy Pope, Director General of the  
International Organization for Migration,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is a pleasure for me to address this august meeting dedicated to exploring ways and avenues for a genuine joint international action to support regular migration mechanisms.

Needless to emphasize the importance of such actions in these critical times as we are witnessing how horizons of mobility are shrinking more and more for millions of young people, particularly in the Global South, aspiring to a better life and a better future.

Unfortunately, due to the vast array of obstacles and challenges standing against fulfilling their dreams, they choose to risk their lives through the dangerous pathways of illegal migration, often falling into the hands of human traffickers, exposing them to exploitation, abuse, and even to death.

In fact, we are witnessing today a worrying surge in illegal migration which is becoming a major source of concern and posing significant challenges to the countries of transit and destination.

Tunisia is among those countries which are heavily impacted by this seriously growing phenomenon, and where managing the tremendous illegal flows of migrants, seeking to reach the Southern shores of Europe, is getting beyond its means and capabilities and is even causing social unrest and security issues.

Let me be clear here on our stance. Tunisia stands against becoming a transit platform nor a place for temporary or permanent residence for illegal migrants. Nonetheless, we have been and we will remain fully committed to observe our

international humanitarian obligations and assume our moral responsibility to take all necessary measures to alleviate the tragedy of illegal migrants on our soil, and to ensure the protection of their human rights and dignity, while working hard at the same time with all partners to ensure their voluntary return to their countries of origin in decent conditions.

In this context, I would like to commend the International Organization for Migration for the invaluable support it has been extending to help Tunisia cope with the recent flows of illegal migration through the voluntary return mechanism and I take this opportunity to call on international community to support these endeavors particularly the European union.

### **Excellencies,**

The increasing number of migrants attempting to cross the Mediterranean and the tragedies which we are witnessing more and more frequently on our shores, underscore the urgent need for coordinated international efforts to collectively address irregular migration in a concerted and inclusive way.

Obviously, ensuring stronger border controls and dismantling the criminal networks of human traffickers are important and necessary security measures. But let's face it honestly, such an approach even if it helps in the short run reducing the figures of illegal migrants, it remains limited and incomplete in the absence of appropriate lasting solutions to the drivers of illegal migration.

Tunisia's vision for this phenomenon has been clearly articulated by the President of the Republic, His Excellency Kais Saied, on several occasions when he has repeatedly called for a comprehensive, solidarity and development based approach that tackles the root causes of illegal migration including the growing poverty and lack of economic opportunities, the worsening socio-economic disparities between the Global South and the developed countries, the surge of violence and conflicts as well as the worsening climate change-induced living conditions.

Obviously, such an approach is possible only when the various concerned actors commit to engage seriously on collaborative efforts and active cooperation based on the principle of shared responsibility and respect for national sovereignty.

### **Excellencies,**

We strongly believe that curbing illegal migration lies also in shaping a fairer cooperation model and establishing more balanced regular migration pathways between the Global South and North based on the interests and priorities of both origin and destination countries.

The regular migration pathways we see today are regrettably far from this desired balance.

They rather correspond largely to the interests of countries of destination at the expense countries of origin, through selective policies aimed at attracting highly skilled persons and higher education graduates.

Every year Tunisia contributes to the welfare of foreign countries through a significant number of its skilled professionals. For instance, in 2022 alone, over 6,500 Tunisian engineers were hired to work in Western countries after completing their entire education and training in Tunisia's State sponsored schools and universities.

This brain drain deprives the countries of origin of precious qualified human resources desperately needed to address the challenges of sustainable development, digital and energy transitions in the Global South. The hard equation we need to work on is to find the right balance between supporting mobility through regular migration of our young professionals and start-uppers and taking into consideration at the same time the needs of developing countries in terms of highly qualified human resources in key sensitive areas to contribute to domestic development endeavors.

At the international level, we strongly believe that the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration,

which represents the first comprehensive and balanced framework for international cooperation on migration governance, even though non-binding, remains a crucial instrument that gains to be implemented as it contains several important commitments.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm that Tunisia remains committed to participate to all international efforts aiming at addressing illegal migration and supporting regular migration pathways and stands ready to engage with all partners on any initiative as long as it aligns with our national approach and is based on mutual respect for national sovereignty.

I wish you, Madam Director General, Ladies and Gentlemen, all success in the remainder of this meeting proceedings, confident that your deliberations will yield serious and practical proposals that we will follow up on and work to implement.

**Thank you**