



AUSTRALIA

*General Debate Statement to the
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General Debate: Australian Statement

Mr Chairman, Let me begin by congratulating Ambassador Swing, on his election to the position of Director-General.

Ambassador Swing, Australia looks forward to working with you over the coming years and we extend our best wishes for a successful term of office.

Mr Chairman, the world today needs a capable, efficient and responsive International Organisation for Migration more than ever before.

Movements of people are at record levels and the drivers of migration are becoming increasingly complex.

While the decisions of individuals to seek out better opportunities for themselves and their families remain at the heart of migration, rapid economic developments (including trade liberalisation), demands for specialised skills, demographic changes, transport improvements and potentially, climate change, shape the sources, destinations and volumes of migratory movements.

Geographic patterns of migration are changing with greater South/South migration a feature of the modern world.

The challenges and opportunities this presents are at the heart of renewed interest in migration by governments.

The recent establishment of the Global Forum on Migration and Development is a visible sign of States' interest in exploring ways of better managing migration and achieving better development benefits from it.

We have, over the past 12 months, seen migration take a central place in the agendas of a number of bodies not normally involved in migration issues. For example, the World Health Organisation and the International Committee of the Red Cross have each had cause to consider how migration intersects with their areas of activity and the nature of their future involvement.

The global financial crisis has added a new and unexpected challenge for governments. While the economic uncertainty will no doubt lead to policy adjustments of some kind by governments in the short term, there

is no reason to believe the long-term drivers of migratory movements will change.

Mr Chairman, IOM, with the extensive expertise of its staff in migration policy and practical service delivery, and its global network of offices, is well placed to assist States with their growing need to manage migration effectively in these changing times.

Australia welcomes Ambassador Swing's commitment to improving the IOM administration's outreach to member states to better understand their needs into the future and to shape IOM services to be responsive.

The past decade has been a period of unprecedented growth for IOM. New leadership provides an opportunity to consolidate – to build on the key strengths already present to ensure that IOM maintains its comparative advantage and remains the service provider of choice.

We believe that IOM's fee-for-service model has been, and will continue to be, an important factor in keeping it efficient and competitive.

As many states review their own capabilities to achieve better outcomes in the area of migration, IOM is particularly well-placed to be a source of expertise for capacity building into the future.

We consider that IOM should also continue to play a key role in policy dialogue to support states in gaining a better understanding of new and emerging migration issues. Such a dialogue must be forward-looking, creative and evidence based.

It follows that if IOM is to continue to play an important role in assisting states to manage migration effectively, States must adequately support it. In recent years IOM has experienced enormous growth, implemented cost saving measures through decentralisation, and been asked to absorb increasing costs beyond its control. We, as members, all have a shared responsibility to ensure that the IOM administration remains adequately funded to enable it to deliver in the face of these increasing constraints.

We consider that IOM's 2007 strategy document, developed by States over a sustained period, provides an effective platform for implementing any future directions.

Mr Chairman, Australia remains a very active country in the area of migration both in terms of our own programs and our cooperation with regional partners.

We expect to remain a major purchaser of IOM services for the delivery of our migration programs and a wide range of capacity building projects and to work with IOM to support a comprehensive approach to the management of mixed migratory flows within our own region.

We also appreciate the work that it does to facilitate informed discussion on migration issues within our region through its support for regional consultative processes, such as the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Human Trafficking and Related Transnational Crime.

We are pleased that IOM will also be providing the light support structure to the Global Forum on Migration and Development and believe that its expertise in providing secretariat support of this nature well suits it to the role.

In the coming year we look forward to working with IOM and the Royal Thai Government in conducting a “Heads of Regional Consultative Processes Meeting”. This meeting follows on from discussions at this year’s GFMD and will explore good practices between sending and receiving countries including capacity building and international cooperation to curb people trafficking and smuggling.

Finally, Mr Chairman, as was the case last year, we are again facing an impending election for one of the principal leadership positions within the organisation. During this time, we should seek to minimise any broader uncertainty that could impact on the effectiveness IOM. We should strive to achieve a smooth process that delivers a candidate capable of effectively supporting our new director-general.