

Statement of H.E. Mr. Shinichi KITAJIMA, Japanese Ambassador
for the IOM Council, 2nd December, 2008

Mr. Chairperson,

First of all, I would like to express my congratulations to Mr. Swing on his assumption of the post of Director General. I hope to work closely with him, the Deputy Director General and other Bureau members in my capacity as Vice-Chairperson.

The Government of Japan fully expects the continued success of the IOM, given its wealth of knowledge and expertise as it operates as the leading international organization “committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society.” We are certain that under the leadership of the new Director-General, the organization will flourish to an even greater extent.

In this regard, I would also like to commend Mr. Swing for his very clear and comprehensive presentation of the First Report to the Council this morning. It certainly provided us with a clear image of the direction in which the DG intends to lead the organization. As suggested by the DG, we sincerely hope that we will have many opportunities to discuss at various venues the strategic framework that should guide the IOM’s work in the future.

Additionally, I would like to thank the Deputy Director General for the statement this morning on her accomplishments and initiatives over the past years as well as the recommendations based upon her observations as DDG.

Mr. Chairperson,

Though it is a non-UN agency, the IOM qualified last month to be a recipient of the “United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security,” to which the Government of Japan is a major contributor. We believe this reflects a commitment by the IOM to the issue of human security as well as to the IOM’s role in international society. We hope the IOM will address further the promotion of human security by utilizing the Human Security Fund.

Recently, through Economic Partnership Agreements with several Southeast Asian countries, Japan has made new efforts to offer workplaces to foreign nationals. There are approximately 2,150,000 foreign nationals living in Japan. Among them, there are nurse candidates and care-giver candidates under these agreements. Although there have been many positive results from this initiative, there remain challenges as well. In recent years, the Government of Japan and the IOM have held a joint symposium in Japan, with the IOM Director General in attendance, that has brought greater attention to these issues.

At present, the Government of Japan continues to examine the possibility of introducing resettlement for refugees and hopes to make use of the knowledge and expertise of the IOM in this area.

Mr. Chairperson,

As you are aware, the IOM has rapidly expanded its organization and activities over the last 10 years. While we applaud the IOM’s flexible response to needs in the field and donor requests, with the IOM involved in such a wide variety of areas, it can be difficult to see exactly what the IOM does as an organization.

Under the new Director General, we hope that the organization will seek to offer assistance of comparative advantage and further enhance its unique position. We hope to see the organization consolidate itself for greater effectiveness and efficiency.

For example, while it has been noted that, in the current financial crisis, migrant workers as a group are in the most vulnerable position, the reality is that it is very difficult to provide them with timely and adequate assistance. The IOM is well-positioned to offer assistance to migrant workers as well as to provide advice on appropriate measures to the Governments of host countries.

Another field in which Japan thinks the IOM can offer assistance is measures against "human trafficking." I would like to draw your attention to the fact that, in Japan, the IOM has supported the return of victims of human trafficking to their homes, an effort that has been met with overwhelming approval.

Finally, we would like to express our appreciation for the work of the IOM Japan office.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.