

South African Statement during the General Debate (Agenda Item 7) of the IOM Council

Geneva, 2-5 December 2008

Mr Chairman –

At the outset South Africa is honoured to add its sincere congratulations to Mr William Swing on his election to the post of DG of IOM. We offer our co-operation and support in the implementation of his vision for the organisation, spelt out earlier in his first Report to the Council. Our expectation is that Mr Swing's in depth knowledge of African challenges and important policy positions will indeed transpire into appropriate approaches and strategies that will assist the Continent to more optimally address the daunting migration related challenges it faces.

My delegation has taken note of the DG's observations regarding certain weaknesses in the current IOM core structure *vis-à-vis* evolving global demands and the need to address these imaginatively and comprehensively. We regard both the appropriation of greater resources to the core structure as well as the introduction of a more stable and predictable budget system as central to addressing these weaknesses and challenges.

In this regard we align ourselves with the remarks made on behalf of the African Group by the distinguished delegate of Nigeria: In particular we emphasise the strong preference expressed for a budget structure based on ZRG instead of ZNG as well as his views on the establishment of a Mission with Regional Functions (MRF) in Central Africa and a Capacity Building Centre.

Both these facilities have been on the IOM agenda for a long time. Mr Chairman, the time has come that the IOM should deliver on promised undertakings or face the risk of a credibility question. In terms of the 2009 Budget Proposal on the table, the launch of these two facilities will be extremely humble, indeed so humble that we believe the proposed allocations to them to be the absolute minimum necessary for their kick-off and these should therefore remain untouched.

At this occasion we would like to focus on field operations – the ground

level where governments, migrants and other stakeholders experience the impact of IOM activity first hand and where IOM "foot soldiers" are, often in difficult circumstances, performing their tasks undaunted. We would like to use this opportunity to pay tribute to them.

Mr Chairman

Field operations occur across the World but, obviously, we are best acquainted with the significant contribution of the IOM Regional Office for Southern Africa based in Pretoria, South Africa.

In the aftermath of the regrettable xenophobic attacks earlier this year in South Africa, IOM performed a crucial co-ordination role amongst relief agencies and relevant government departments, and also provided immediate relief items to 2,500 displaced families. IOM, in close co-operation with UNHCR and relevant government agencies, also assisted over four hundred vulnerable displaced foreigners to voluntary return to their homelands.

Further examples of IOM successes include the comprehensive programme to combat trafficking to, from and within Southern Africa which has led to a significant improvement in our ability to address this scourge and helped us in our efforts to improve awareness-raising, provide assistance to victims and to draft legislation.

In addition the IOM's efforts to create partnerships on HIV within mobile populations have made a major contribution to reduce and/or contain the spread of HIV in South Africa and the subcontinent.

Mr Chairman

Also, the Regional Office has facilitated a number of initiatives towards building our capacity to manage migration. Such initiatives will continue to be required for the foreseeable future as my Government and those of other SADC Member States work toward the implementation of the SADC Protocol on the Facilitated Movement of Persons.

While we do recognize the urgent need to devise retention strategies in order to reduce brain drain, we also welcome IOM's efforts to engage with governments and diasporas to promote the transfer of skills and resources as well as the benefits of return.

Finally, we would like to mention the Migration Dialogue for Southern

Africa (MIDSA), in which IOM plays a crucial facilitating role, and which has during recent years succeeded in bringing together senior officials and policy makers from across Southern Africa to discuss migration issues.

From these examples it is clear that IOM has established a *niche* role for itself with regards to migration variables in Southern Africa. We commend the organisation for the achievements obtained with its Southern African initiatives and programmes, many of which could be used as models worth emulating elsewhere on the African Continent. We look forward to enhance our future co-operation with IOM.

I thank you.