

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR LAURA MIRACHIAN,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ITALY,
AT THE 98TH SESSION OF IOM COUNCIL
(Geneva, 23 November 2009)**

Thank you Chair.

I wish to thank the Director-General for his interesting and thought-provoking opening remarks and for the excellent work accomplished so far at the head of the Organization. I would also like to welcome the Deputy Director-General, Amb. Laura Thompson, at her first Council in her new capacity.

Italy fully endorses the Statement made by Sweden on behalf of the European Union.

I will only raise few points that are of special interest to my country, one of them being the ongoing review of the organizational structure of IOM.

We support the overall aim of enhancing coherence, prioritizing goals and streamlining the organization. At the same time, we are confident that the Mediterranean region will remain on the focus. And that the IOM Office in Rome will retain its role of coordination in the area, as well as the necessary capacity. This would avoid disruptions in the delicate balance established in its relation with the Mediterranean region.

As Director General Swing underlines in its report, today, more than ever, migration is a feature of our life. It is universally recognized that migrants are contributing to the development of our societies. At the same time, smuggling and trafficking networks are also growing phenomena and a global concern.

A comprehensive approach to migration management is needed, taking into account both the fundamental human rights of migrants and states sovereignty and security.

The challenge is huge, the response has to be coordinated. IOM is playing a crucial and effective role in this respect. We appreciate the full consistence of its policy with the conclusions of the Conference jointly organized in Palermo in may by IOM, UNICRI, the

University of Palermo and the Italian Office of the Council of European Municipalities, on the 10th anniversary of the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Supplementary Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons.

Turning to my Country, Italy is undergoing major social and cultural changes: from a Country of emigration we are becoming a Country of stable immigration as well of temporary immigration for people wanting to reach other final destinations.

A drastic change in a fairly short time is taking place. And arrivals of migrants on our shores are massive: it should be recognized that no one, alone, can afford dealing with such a problem. Partnership and burden-sharing are needed. We trust in the European migration and asylum policy to be adopted later this year in Bruxelles. A EU Global Approach to Migration is definitely a priority for us.

The financial and economic crisis and its social consequences carries strong risks of an impact on migration. Decrease in remittances is one of the results. According to World Bank estimates, remittances amounted to almost 450 billions of dollars in 2008, and supported 700 millions people in the developing Countries.

I would like to share the success of the "International Conference on Remittances", organised in Rome on November 9th, jointly with the World Bank as a follow-up of the G8 Summit in l'Aquila, in this respect: the Conference provided for a working plan for reduction from 10% to 5% over the next five years of the costs of sending remittances home. The World Bank Spring Meeting next april in Washington will monitor achievements.

We are grateful for the valuable IOM contribution which made possible the launching of the "Italian website on the Cost of Remittances" by the Ministry of Foreign Affair, the Bank of Italy and the Association of the Italian Banks. The website, the first validated by the World Bank, targets migrants from 14 countries living in Italy and provides an independent, transparent and free service, allowing to choose the best way to send remittances back home.

The crisis is having an impact also on major economies. We take note of the budget reform package that, as the DG said, would

transparently allow the Organization to cover its fixed costs. At the same time, we ask for your understanding on our budgetary constraints at the present time. As other Governments, we are implementing a very strict national budget that doesn't allow for any major increase in contributions to International Organizations.

Nevertheless, recognizing that IOM's resources are stretched to the limit, and having always been a strong supporter of IOM's activities, we will strive to meet the Administration's expectations to be able to cover statutory increases.