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*98th Session of the Council of the International Organization for Migration
November 23, 2009*

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, and Distinguished Colleagues:

Let me first congratulate Ambassador Kitajima of Japan and the Council Bureau on their election. Welcome and congratulations also to Ambassador Thompson, who is attending her first Council meeting as Deputy Director General. Although this is her first time on the podium, she has a wealth of experience with this organization from which, I am sure, we will all benefit during our deliberations this week. The United States looks forward to working with you over the next five years. Finally, I would like to welcome IOM's new NGO observer.

Migration today affects virtually every corner of the globe with more people on the move than ever before in human history. In such a world, the importance of IOM, an organization dedicated to the principle of promoting humane and orderly migration, is more critical than ever, and it is vital that IOM have the institutional capacity to take on this role.

Mr. Director General, we want to commend you for setting such an ambitious agenda your first year in office. You have proactively sought to address core weaknesses in IOM's organizational, personnel, and budget structures. Addressing these structural issues will not be easy, but the IOM administration and staff have approached the challenge with focus, energy, and dedication. We appreciate and share this commitment to creating a stronger, more responsive organization, and we welcome your and the Deputy Director General's leadership in making IOM a model of a transparent and accountable international organization.

The dedication of IOM staff and administration is particularly evident in the effort to review the organization's structure. We appreciate the time taken to conduct the structural review and welcome the thoughtful proposal put forward by the structural review team.

We also recognize the efforts of the Deputy Director General who, mere months into her tenure, has taken on the equally significant task of further developing and implementing the recommendations of the structural review team. We are pleased to see the spirit of collaboration that continues to develop between the Director General, the Deputy Director General, and the IOM staff, and we urge the Administration to keep member states informed through close consultation and periodic progress reports as this process moves forward.

We are very pleased to see the progress IOM has made in strengthening its personnel structures through the appointment of a Director for Human Resources, a renewed staff rotation policy, and an emphasis on staff well-being and development. Not all change is smooth, and we appreciate the Administration's admission that some processes, like staff rotation, can be improved upon. We urge the administration to consult closely with Staff worldwide on the changes taking place in the organization, and to strive for fairness in its human resource policies.

We also commend the administration's work in presenting a budget document that reflects its best judgment as to current financial needs of the organization. It is important that, as Member States, we base our budget decisions on a clear understanding of the organization's needs, and that we understand the short and long term implications of failing to meet these needs. We encourage IOM to continue this frank and open discussion, and to seek ways to improve the flow of information between Member States and the Administration, as we consider not only the immediate budget request but also the broader issue of budget reform.

Finally, we applaud IOM's increased collaboration with UNHCR and the progress made over the last year. This coordination has been particularly visible and appreciated as IOM and UNHCR work with relevant governments to address mixed migratory flows. Most recently, IOM and UNHCR partnered to organize the Regional Conference on Refugee Protection and International Migration in the Americas in Costa Rica last week. Drawing on its well-established position in the Americas and its field experience, IOM brought excellent technical expertise to the table. We encourage IOM to continue working with UNHCR to strengthen collaboration on the 10-Point Plan and to provide training to interested governments, as well as to develop mutual referral mechanisms for asylum seekers, potential victims of Trafficking-in Persons, and vulnerable migrants.

Mr. Chairman,

The United States greatly values IOM as a strategic partner in advancing our mutual goals of legal, orderly and humane migration. In the face of growing migration challenges, we are fortunate that under the leadership of Director General Swing and Deputy Director General Thompson, the organization is working to reinforce its internal structure to ensure it is more effective and efficient in the future. We urge our fellow Member States to participate actively in this process.

The United States looks forward to working closely with our colleagues in the room to strengthen the organization and support its role in the international community.