

GENERAL DEBATE: Australian Statement

Introduction

Mr Chairman, it is clear that we live in an era of great human mobility. In a highly interconnected world, more people than ever are crossing borders to seek economic, social and development opportunities.

DG Swing's leadership

Mr Chairman, in this complex operating environment for IOM we continue to value the Director General's strong leadership. We appreciate his open, transparent and consultative approach, as well as his guidance during a period of significant reform for the Organization. Australia appreciates IOM's open engagement with its members and improved partnerships with other international organisations.

These factors have further strengthened the Organization and result in continued delivery of high quality services to its members.

Structure Reform

Mr Chairman, Australia is appreciative of IOM's structural reform efforts. We commend IOM for completing the restructure of Headquarters on schedule and support the next phase of the reform – rationalising the field structure. We believe that it will strengthen IOM and make it more adaptive to changing migration situations.

Budget Reform

Mr Chairman, we commend IOM for taking measures to absorb increases in the budget; however, we accept that further savings on this scale are impractical. In recent years IOM has experienced enormous growth, ranging from the increasing requests made by the growing membership to dealing with new trends and emergencies, such as the devastating natural disasters in Pakistan, Haiti and elsewhere.

We are concerned that budget constraints are impacting on IOM's ability to remain flexible and responsive to these challenges.

In this context we welcome the efforts of the Working Group on Budget Reform. We support a focus on long-term solutions to IOM's budget issues to ensure that we have a budget structure which is predictable and durable, while preserving IOM's fee-for-service model.

IOM, global migration trends and relationship with Australia

Mr Chairman, the challenge of managing international migration effectively is to reduce the risk to migrants from discrimination, exploitation and xenophobia, while at the same time facilitating the immense contribution that migrants make to the global economy and development.

Australia firmly believes that IOM is uniquely placed to assist governments to grapple with the challenges and contribute toward the effective management of international migration. IOM is the only inter-governmental organisation with a mandate across all facets of migration. With its global network of offices and extensive policy and practical expertise, there is no better organisation than IOM to assist States to manage migration in an effective and efficient way.

In this regard, Australia greatly values its partnership with IOM. The Organization assists us to deliver our migration programs and to implement a wide range of capacity building projects. Australia commends IOM for facilitating informed discussion on migration issues within our region through its support for such fora as the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Human Trafficking and Related Transnational Crime.

We commend IOM and the Philippines Government for recently hosting a Bali Process workshop on 'Repatriation and Reintegration' to develop a consistent regional approach to the voluntary return of irregular migrants, unsuccessful asylum seekers, victims of trafficking and other migrants wishing to return.

Regional Protection Framework

Mr Chairman, the Asia-Pacific is characterised by a high level of mixed flows, placing pressure on host and transit countries. Developing countries carry by far the largest burden. Inconsistency in approaches to managing these flows creates an environment in which migrants are open to exploitation and risk.

Australia is committed to the development of a comprehensive approach to irregular migration in the Asia-Pacific. Through cooperation with countries of origin, transit and destination, as well as IOM and other international organisations, a sustainable framework for managing migration in the region can be achieved.

A key element of this cooperative approach is increasing access to fair and orderly asylum seeker processing arrangements in the region, including arrangements for durable solutions. We look forward to continuing to work with IOM and other key partners to develop this important initiative.

Anniversary

Mr Chairman, next year Australia looks forward to working with IOM to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Organization. The anniversary will be a time to reflect on the strengths of the Organization, tackle the pressing problems that we still face and raise IOM's profile by promoting the work of the Organization.

Closing

In closing, Australia believes IOM's global presence, broad mandate and fee-for-service project model are its key strengths. We commend IOM for its ongoing assistance to States to manage migration effectively, efficiently and humanely.

Thank you Mr Chairman.