

**SOUTH AFRICAN STATEMENT AT THE 99th COUNCIL OF THE
INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION FOR MIGRATION (IOM)**

29 November – 2 December 2010

South Africa congratulates IOM on, especially, the dynamic management approaches and new found vibrancy reflected in the organisation during the past year – a year that presented many challenges, of which dealing with the impact of the world economic downturn on IOM, was not the least. We acknowledge, Mr Director General and Madam Deputy-Director General, the decisive role you, and assisted by your management team, played in this regard. South Africa offers its full support to your continued leadership in the ensuing year – the 60th anniversary year of IOM, which we think should be commemorated in an appropriate manner.

We associate ourselves with the statement made by the distinguished Ambassador of Zimbabwe on behalf of the African Group. Also, we welcome the new IOM members that have been admitted earlier-on during the meeting. In particular, we are delighted about the fact that three of our immediate neighbour states have now also become fully fledged IOM members. We congratulate His Excellency, the distinguished Ambassador of Algeria on his election as Chairperson of the Council as well as the other persons elected to the Bureau.

Director-General, you have in your report to this Council accurately characterized migration as becoming a “mega-trend of the twenty-first century”. The history of human kind has in so many respects been that of migration - spreading people, goods, genes, ideas and the like around the globe and through the impact hereof, shaping our destiny. However, the mere magnitude and impact of the phenomenon in our times – migration set to double during the next four decades, dramatically unveils the demands and challenges that it will present to governments, business, civil society and, not least, to migration specialists and managers worldwide and, therefore of course IOM, it being the foremost body representing the international migration management fraternity.

As is pointed out in the 2010 World Migration Report, tabled earlier during this Council meeting, two major approaches present themselves in reacting to the migration realities of this century. The *first* relates to maximising the historic opportunities flowing from the inevitabilities of migration challenges by *inter alia* engaging sufficient resources to reap the benefits inherent of its consequences. Sound policy design as well as the development of adequate capacities to properly manage migration in an effective, orderly and humane way, as well as to the benefit of all, are key in this regard.

Secondly, approaches based on the building of proverbial walls and barricades, mass deportations and destruction of shelter as well as enacting stricter legislation and introducing harsher bureaucratic measures as a response to what you in your DG's report have labelled as: "rising anti-immigration sentiments" might be considered. We applaud the fact that you have addressed this matter head-on and heed your warnings of the negative results such strategies could bear. We are acutely aware of how difficult it is to manage potentially volatile situations resulting from heated social tensions in situations of mass-migrant influx and have ourselves indeed suffered the consequences hereof. Migration to South Africa (especially in terms of mixed flows of asylum seekers and economic migrants) have indeed in recent times reached unprecedented levels.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees has during the recent October 2010 UNHCR Excom contextualised the magnitude of the situation that we have to deal with in our country in no uncertain terms when he pointed out that whereas the 27 EU member states, with the might of all their resources, had to deal with a total of 240 000 asylum seekers during the last year, South Africa singularly and in the context of its limited resources, faced the influx of 220 000 asylum seekers during the same period. This reflects the daunting challenges that we are facing. Yet it is of note, that the SA Government's response to this has been the current overhaul of its immigration policy based on the sound, efficient and humane management of the inevitabilities of experienced trends and includes dealing with the ^{possible} re-emergence of xenophobic tendencies. A concrete example of this approach is the current project of regularisation of Zimbabweans in the country, which, as stated by the Minister of Home Affairs, will serve as a pilot for similar projects relating to other countries in the Southern African Region.

We urge all member states to, each in their own unique circumstances, manage related challenges effectively but always accounting to due process and fundamental human rights considerations.

We would also like to refer to the exemplary work that the IOM Regional Office in Pretoria is doing and we appreciate the close co-operation they maintain with our migration agencies in South Africa. In particular we would like to mention the involvement of that office in capacity building relating to various dimensions of migration management in the subcontinent. Also, we benefit substantially from IOM's experience in the field of migration policy development, especially as we have embarked on a process of fundamental policy review. Furthermore, of note are IOM's initiatives in the field of human trafficking which, as elsewhere, has become a menace in the subcontinent. And of critical importance is also the assistance that IOM is providing throughout the Region with health projects emanating from high mobility ratios within Southern Africa but also from further a-field in the continent and beyond. South Africa encourages IOM to continue its good work at this important Regional Office.