

*International Organization for Migration
99th Council*

*U.S. Statement
November 29, 2010*

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, and Distinguished Colleagues:

Let me first congratulate Ambassador Jazaïry and the Council Bureau on their election. The United States looks forward to working closely with you over the coming year. I would also like to thank Ambassador Kitajima of Japan for presiding over Member State deliberations effectively, with consistent patience and good humor.

I welcome IOM's new member States: the Kingdom of Lesotho, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Timor Leste, the Republic of Botswana, and the Kingdom of Swaziland. You are joining this organization at a critical moment in its development, and we look forward to working with you and all our fellow Member States as we set the course for what is certain to be a dynamic future for the organization and prepare to celebrate its 60th anniversary.

Finally, we welcome the International Institute of Humanitarian Law, the Federation of Christian Organizations for Volunteer Service, and the Scalabrini International Migration Network as new NGO observers.

The Director General's presentation and the new World Migration Report highlight the changing migration landscape: the number of migrants worldwide has grown, there is a wider diversity of ethnic and cultural groups migrating than ever before, a growing proportion of whom are women, and there is increased south to south migration. As migration changes, so too do the challenges and opportunities confronting policy-makers.

IOM, the leading inter-governmental organization in the field of international migration, is dedicated to the principle of promoting humane and orderly migration. IOM plays a critical role in protecting the human element of migration. With its expertise, IOM also helps states maximize the benefits of migration by building the capacity of key actors and policy makers. IOM does this in concert with governments as well as other international organizations. We appreciate this strong cooperation, particularly the efforts IOM and UNHCR have made to provide protection for vulnerable migrants around the world.

To meet these objectives, however, IOM must have strong organizational, policy, and budget structures. In this context, Mr. Director General, we want to commend the work you and the Deputy Director General have embarked on to build a stronger, more unified organization. We believe, with this streamlined field structure, the organization will retain its capacity for flexibility and responsiveness – a key strength of the IOM. You have approached the implementation of the structural reform in a logical, measured, open and transparent manner. We know this implementation continues to require significant effort from IOM staff worldwide. The commitment of IOM staff to this process, in addition to their regular duties, in a year with not one, but two major humanitarian disasters, is truly praiseworthy.

IOM's staff is the organization's greatest asset. We note with sadness the passing of six IOM staff members in 2010 during the course of their duties. Staff well-being is and should be a priority for member states and the organization. We are pleased to witness progress made in addressing staff concerns and strengthening personnel structures. We urge the administration to continue to consult closely with Staff worldwide, and to strive for fairness in its human resource policies.

We welcome the administrations' frank assessment of its gender coordination efforts. While there are many accomplishments, there is also work to be done – particularly in the areas of gender mainstreaming, and in improving the gender balance within the organization. We thank the Director General for his attention to this and look forward to progress in these areas.

Finally, we commend the administration's work in presenting a budget document that clearly outlines the implications of the limited budget request. We encourage IOM to continue this discussion, and to work with Member States as we consider the broader issue of budget reform.

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 build better for the future. The administration is doing its part, now we as Member States must do our part.

The States that make up IOM's membership have a responsibility to ensure the organization has the support it needs to meet migration challenges in the future. The United States agrees that the budget, as currently structured, does not sufficiently support the key functions of the organization. Member States must engage on this issue. We appreciate the strong leadership of Ambassador Kitajima over the last year in establishing and moving forward the work of the IOM Budget Reform Working Group. Finding a long-term solution may take time, but we need to make this investment.

In addition to the pressing needs of budget reform, Member States have an obligation to promote sound governance. More than 10 years ago, the Council adopted amendments to the IOM constitution which have yet to be ratified by all Member States. We urge our fellow Member States to enact these amendments as soon as possible.

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.