

Statement by Zambia to the 99th IOM Council Session

Thank you, Chairman,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Distinguished colleagues,

The Zambian delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the Ambassador of Zimbabwe on behalf of the African Group. My delegation congratulates you warmly, Mr. Chairman, on your election to the chair and we are convinced that under your leadership this meeting will be fruitful.

We others in welcoming the new members of the IOM namely the Kingdom of Lesotho, the Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, Republic of Botswana and the Kingdom of Swaziland. We extend our welcome to the new observers, the International Institute of Humanitarian Law, the Federation of Christian Organization for International Volunteer Service and the Scarabrini International Migration Network. The increase in membership, Mr. Chairman, reflects the growing importance that is now attached to migration. The IOM should capitalize on this momentum to galvanize the membership to deal with the bottlenecks that affect humane and orderly migration. It is also a sign of confidence that Member States have in the organization and an endorsement of the good work that it has been doing.

We thank the Director General for the report to the Council and as indicated by Zimbabwe, growing anti-migrant sentiments in some countries of destination is of great worry. It is clear however, that despite these sentiments and the challenges that migrants face when they move, the number of people leaving their countries of origin to go and seek life elsewhere across borders and oceans has not decreased but rather increases day by day.

Mr. Chairman,

Migration is mostly thought of as a South North movement and many justifications are given for anti-migrant sentiments by those who advocate

for anti-migrant policies in their countries. And good reasons are also given on why migrants should be accepted. Perhaps we should not continue to ask ourselves questions as to why these two positions, two sides of the same coin, cannot converge. May be, we should concentrate on finding real solutions to the challenge of how to manage these two aspects so that migration can be beneficial to all stakeholders.

Xenophobia and anti-foreigner sentiments are not only detrimental to migrant populations, but to local people as well. Migration will not stop as more and more people are leaving their countries due to instability and other multiple reasons, finding refuge and a way of life in other parts of the world as they have done since the beginning of history. The theme of this year's Migration Report 'The Future of Migration: Building Capacities for Change' is a brain teaser that should give the IOM, Member States and our partners reflections on the importance of migration in both the countries of origin and destination. The IOM should continue to lead all stakeholders in the fight against anti-migrant sentiments and strive to come up with measures to protect migrants so that they can lead decent lives wherever they choose to live.

Chairperson,

Zambia has over the years, played host to our brothers and sisters from the DRC, Angola, and the Great Lakes Region and from the Horn of Africa. With the assistance of the IOM, the majority of the people have been repatriated and have returned to their countries of origin while a large number have chosen to become part of the family of Zambians through integration. Our government is yet to decide on the way forward on this issue. Because we have lived with our brothers and sisters for many years, integration has already occurred at many levels through inter marriages, professional life and business dealings.

We will be accepting those who have chosen to live in Zambia with the conviction that some myths about migrants can longer be validated. Migrants do not pilfer jobs. Their jobs do not have an adverse impact on the wages in the destination countries. They are not a burden on taxpayers. While some migrants engage in criminal activities, the majority of them are law abiding individuals who have a lot to offer in terms of skill, knowledge and experience. Zambia has received enormous assistance in managing this aspect of migration and lends her gratitude to the IOM which has been on our side all the way. We are convinced that the IOM will continue to assist us as we work on formal integration of those refugees who have decided to make Zambia their home.

In conclusion, Chairperson,

Zambia values her partnership with the IOM which extends to other programmes in counter trafficking, overseas resettlement of refugees, disaster management and mitigation and the most recently launched project on diaspora engagement. Under this project, the IOM is assisting the Government of the Republic of Zambia to build institutional capacity to engage with the Zambian diaspora through the establishment of an Office of Diaspora Affairs (ODA), with a mandate of mobilizing and coordinating diaspora involvement in Zambia's national development. We are happy that the project promises to score successes in policy development and coordination and will be pivotal in coordinating the transfer of skills and financial resources of Zambians in the diaspora for the development of the country.

I thank you Chair.