STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROGRAMMES AND FINANCE

Twenty-eighth Session

REPORT OF THE

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROGRAMMES AND FINANCE

ON THE TWENTY-EIGHTH SESSION

Geneva
30 June and 1 July 2021
Rapporteur: Mr. M von Ungern-Sternberg (Germany)

CONTENTS

ACRONYMS

COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
GSAC	Global Staff Association Committee
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IDP	Internally displaced person
IGF	Internal Governance Framework
Migration MPTF	Start-up Fund for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration
MOPAN	Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OSI	Operational Support Income
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNOCT	United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism

REPORT OF THE
STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROGRAMMES AND FINANCE
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Introduction

1.   The Standing Committee on Programmes and Finance met at the Centre International de Conférences Genève for its Twenty-eighth Session on 30 June and 1 July 2021. Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, the meetings were held in a hybrid format, with some participants attending via remote connection. The Session was chaired by Mr E.P. Garcia (Philippines). Four meetings were held.

2.   The following Member States were represented.[1]

Afghanistan	Djibouti	Lao People's	Russian Federation
Albania	Dominica	Democratic Republic	Senegal
Algeria	Ecuador	Latvia	Serbia
Angola	Egypt	Lesotho	Sierra Leone
Argentina	El Salvador	Libya	Slovakia
Armenia	Estonia	Lithuania	Slovenia
Australia	Ethiopia	Luxembourg	South Africa
Austria	Fiji	Madagascar	Spain
Azerbaijan	Finland	Malta	Sri Lanka
Bangladesh	France	Mauritania	Sudan
Belarus	Georgia	Mexico	Sweden
Belgium	Germany	Montenegro	Switzerland
Botswana	Ghana	Morocco	Thailand
Brazil	Greece	Mozambique	Togo
Bulgaria	Guatemala	Myanmar	Tunisia
Burkina Faso	Guyana	Nepal	Turkey
Cambodia	Haiti	Netherlands	Uganda
Cameroon	Holy See	Nicaragua	Ukraine
Canada	Honduras	Niger	United Kingdom
Chile	Hungary	Nigeria	United States of
China	Iran (Islamic Republic of)	Norway	America
Colombia	Ireland	Pakistan	Venezuela (Bolivarian
Congo	Israel	Panama	Republic of)
Costa Rica	Italy	Paraguay	Viet Nam
Côte d'Ivoire	Japan	Peru	Yemen
Croatia	Jordan	Philippines	Zambia
Cuba	Kazakhstan	Poland	Zimbabwe
Cyprus	Kenya	Portugal	
Czechia		Republic of Korea	
Denmark		Romania	

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[1]   The list of participants is contained in document S/28/13. Unless otherwise indicated, all documents and slide presentations are available on the Standing Committee section of the IOM website.

3.	The Member States agreed to a request made by the Permanent Representatives of the Delegation of the European Union and of Portugal, on behalf of the European Union rotating presidency, that representatives of the European Union participate as experts in the consideration of the relevant items of the provisional agenda (S/28/1).

Adoption of the agenda

4.	The provisional agenda contained in document S/28/1 was adopted by the Standing Committee and subsequently issued as document S/28/14.

Credentials of representatives

5.	The Standing Committee noted that the Director General had examined the credentials of the representatives of the Member States listed in paragraph 2 and found them to be in order.

Status report on outstanding contributions to the Administrative Part of the Budget and Member State voting rights

6.	The Administration introduced the document entitled Status report on outstanding contributions to the Administrative Part of the Budget and Member State voting rights (as at 15 May 2021) (C/112/5). Total outstanding assessed contributions for 2021 and previous years as at that date amounted to about CHF 37,961,000, which was more than the amount outstanding on the same date in 2020. Since the document had been issued, however, contributions had been received from 14 Member States, in one case in keeping with the Member State's payment plan. Thirty-six Member States were subject to Article 4 of the Constitution, of which 16 had lost the right to vote.

7.	The Administration reminded Member States in arrears that they had the option of agreeing a flexible payment plan enabling them to pay their outstanding contributions in the manner most convenient to them. Under the payment plans, Member States had the further option of paying their arrears in the local currency (provided the Organization was in a position to use the funds in the country). At present, four of the Member States in arrears had negotiated a payment plan, but three had not met their obligations and were therefore considered to have lost their voting rights.

8.	The Director General stressed the importance for all Member States to pay their assessed contributions or reach an agreement with the Administration, which remained willing to engage with them to determine the best solution for them.

9.	The Standing Committee took note of the contents of document C/112/5 and the additional information provided by the Administration. It urged Member States in arrears to pay their contributions in full or, in consultation with the Administration, to agree to a payment plan and to fully respect the payment conditions.

Presentation by the Director General

10.	The Director General paid tribute to his predecessor, William Lacy Swing, who had recently passed away. A tireless champion of IOM's mission and of the rights of migrants and displaced populations, the previous Director General had presided over a period of extraordinary growth and development for IOM and would be remembered for overseeing its entry into the United Nations

system. He had cherished his interactions with both staff and beneficiaries in the field and had always found time to listen to their concerns and views.

11.   The Standing Committee observed a minute of silence in memory of the previous Director General.

12.   In a slide presentation summing up the content of the Abridged Annual Report for 2020 (C/112/4), the Annual Report for 2020 (C/112/INF/1) and the Fourth Update on the Application of the Internal Governance Framework (S/28/INF/1), the Director General provided a brief reflection on IOM's activities and results in 2020, a year marked by upheaval in the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak. He also updated the Standing Committee on institutional developments during that time.

13.   The Standing Committee also had before it the draft resolution on the Annual Report for 2020 (S/28/L/1).

(a)   Annual Report for 2020

14.   In the ensuing discussion, deep appreciation was expressed to all IOM staff members, who had stayed and delivered services to migrants worldwide during the COVID-19 pandemic under daunting circumstances and often in remote and conflict-affected areas. The Administration was encouraged to fulfil its duty of care to staff, including in terms of mental health and psychosocial support. Deep appreciation was also expressed to the outgoing Deputy Director General for her many years of dedicated service.

15.   Several representatives and regional groups, observing that the COVID-19 pandemic had created new vulnerabilities among migrants, exacerbated humanitarian needs and raised many obstacles to achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, said that it was vital for IOM to do everything possible to ensure that the situation did not deteriorate further, in particular for migrant women and children, who were disproportionately affected. The global challenges faced by all countries in the past year had highlighted the agility and responsiveness of IOM, which was primarily a field-based organization and thus able to swiftly scale up operations and respond when and where most needed. Certain Member States had increased their contributions to IOM during 2020 to enable it to act accordingly.

16.   Many representatives, acknowledging the importance for migrants – as key participants in the post-pandemic recovery – to have rapid and equitable access, without discrimination, to COVID-19 vaccines, expressed concern that vaccine supplies were insufficient and capacities for vaccination campaigns limited. The COVAX Facility provided a robust means of addressing those shortfalls but required adequate funding; other requisites were greater support for the waiving of intellectual property rights and more local production of health products. In addition, IOM should contribute to the delivery and distribution of vaccines worldwide. One regional group added that the COVAX Humanitarian Buffer constituted a last resort for facilitating access to COVID-19 vaccines for persons in situations of vulnerability.

17.   Two delegates encouraged donors to strengthen their support for IOM with non-earmarked contributions, so as to enable the Organization to act effectively in the face of the crisis. One regional group called on Member States to support the IOM Global Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan for COVID-19, which was currently funded at 54 per cent, and on all countries – of origin, transit and destination – to uphold their political commitments, including to address the root causes of irregular migration.

(b)   Update on current activities

18.   Many Member States expressed satisfaction at the outcome of the process to strengthen IOM senior management by creating two posts of Deputy Director General, for operations and for management and reform, respectively. They welcomed the two new Deputy Directors General and commended their appointment via a merit-based process carried out with due regard for gender balance and geographical diversity.

19.   Turning to the process of institutional reform, two representatives applauded the progress made on implementation of all IGF workstreams. Two others, acknowledging the urgent need to complete the Business Transformation initiative (workstream 3) so as to replace the outdated enterprise resource planning system, expressed the hope that others would also recognize that need and consider funding what was a critical IGF element. Another requested more information on the use of unearmarked funds to cover all the measures under the Business Transformation initiative, which would require increasing resources at a time when funding levels were expected to remain stable. Lastly, one representative asked for further information on the proposals for new positions made in the Revision of the Programme and Budget for 2021 (S/28/6); while the positions were relevant, decisions on them should be taken as part of IGF implementation and the Business Transformation effort.

20.   Several delegates commended the Administration on the impressive progress it had made on IGF workstream 4, the internal justice system. Efforts to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse remained an important as ever, a recent case having demonstrated that it was by no means self-evident that awareness of the problem was followed by action. The Office of the Inspector General was one of the most critical components of IOM's oversight system, and it was therefore welcome that one of its investigator positions was now covered by more stable, core funding. In view of the breadth of the IGF, the Administration should periodically update the full membership on how it was prioritizing activities under the relevant work plan, if possible using a standard reporting mechanism.

21.   Other delegates encouraged the Administration and the Member States to draw on the success of the reform process so far to tackle other areas, notably the question of geographical representation on the Bureau. The most complex challenge was nonetheless budget reform and the structure of core funding; the Administration must provide comprehensive information and a very clear timeline on that process and continue to consult with Member States in a timely manner, so as to enable consensual decisions on the most urgent needs.

22.   One delegate said that documents for governing body meetings should be made available to the Member States at the latest two weeks before the meeting concerned, and that decision points should be clearly identified in each document.

23.   In response to the comments made, the Director General thanked those that had shown their commitment to IOM by contributing generously and flexibly to its operations in the wake of the COVID 19 outbreak. The pandemic must not become a new source of inequality between Member States, and the Administration was therefore working with other international organizations on international platforms of dialogue and cooperation to redefine, for example, the health requirements for travel.

24.   IOM kept all Member States informed of its internal reform efforts – including by periodic briefings – and of the sources of the funds needed to implement them, namely drawdowns from the OSI reserve, overheads and unearmarked contributions. The Business Transformation initiative was crucial to the continuity of IOM operations, and he echoed the appeal for Member State funding for the new enterprise resource planning system. He also pledged that the Administration would continue to invest in the internal justice system. The fact that the time needed to respond to allegations had

been reduced even though the number of cases had increased showed that those investments were successful and that staff trusted the system's integrity. IOM remained fully committed to a zero-tolerance approach to any form of sexual exploitation or abuse. It was strengthening and fine-tuning the modules that it had contributed to inter-agency training on prevention thereof, which must be incorporated into specific risk assessment approaches. Tailored training and action were required in areas where the likelihood of sexual exploitation and abuse was higher.

25.   IOM was well aware of migrants' vulnerability in the current context, particularly those employed in the informal sector who often lacked access to social protection. In the short term, it aimed to ensure their access to health care, in particular COVID-19 vaccination. He shared the concerns voiced regarding equitable access to vaccination. Vaccine production must be stepped up and the distribution of existing vaccines made fairer through the COVAX Facility; IOM was working with the GAVI Alliance to that end and continued to advocate the inclusion of migrants in national vaccination plans.

26.   The Standing Committee took note of the information provided by the Director General in his presentation and adopted Resolution No. 25 of 30 June 2021 on the Annual Report for 2020.

Financial Report for the year ended 31 December 2020

27.   The Standing Committee had before it the Financial Report for the year ended 31 December 2020 (C/112/3), the related draft resolution (S/28/L/2), the Statement of the External Auditor to the Twenty-eighth Session of the Standing Committee on Programmes and Finance on the financial operations of the International Organization for Migration for the 2020 financial year (S/28/9), and the Report of the External Auditor to the 112th Session of the Council of the International Organization for Migration for the financial year 2020 (S/28/CRP/1).

28.   The Administration noted that the External Auditor had once again issued an unqualified opinion on the Financial Report. For the first time, the whole audit process had been carried out remotely, which had been an additional challenge. The External Auditor had made a number of observations on how certain processes could be strengthened. Those that the Administration had been unable to address had been presented as recommendations in the Report of the External Auditor.

29.   Drawing the Member States' attention to the main points of document C/112/3 in a slide presentation, the Administration reported that the Organization's revenue, expenditure, level of funding, liquidity and overall assets had all increased in 2020. The high level of liquidity presented challenges relating to low or negative interest rates and high bank charges, and suggestions would be made for change in that respect going forward. The amounts payable to suppliers had increased by 50 per cent, mainly as a result of the slow manual processing methods being used. It was expected that the Business Transformation initiative would improve that situation. While operational expenditures continued to increase, the core budget remained static thereby reducing its proportion to total expenditure, which underlined the importance of the discussions on budget reform.

30.   Although the Administrative Part of the Budget had ended the year with a surplus of CHF 443,000, the provision for doubtful receivables relating to outstanding assessed contributions had increased, resulting in an overall deficit of CHF 3.7 million. That figure would be reduced as new contributions were received.

31.   With regard to the Operational Part of the Budget, cash and cash equivalents had increased by about 18 per cent, implying strong liquidity. Other assets, mainly operational advances to vendors and implementing partners, had increased by 17 per cent. Implementing partners had been particularly crucial to service delivery during the pandemic, when the Organization could not always be present in certain locations. Employee benefit liabilities had increased by 27 per cent.

32.   OSI, which constituted a significant part of the funding for the Organization's core structure, had generated about USD 6.5 million more than budgeted in 2020 and had registered underspending of about USD 6.6 million as a result of COVID-19-related delays. It had therefore ended the year with a surplus of USD 13.1 million in total. Of that surplus, USD 4 million had been allocated to the IOM Development Fund, bringing its budget allocation up to the level required by Council Resolution No. 1390 of 24 November 2020, and USD 1 million had been applied to unforeseen project shortfalls. The remaining USD 8.1 million had been allocated to the OSI reserve, which had ended the year with a balance of USD 62 million, including the 2020 drawdown of USD 13.1 million.

33.   Turning to the question of contingent liabilities, the Administration reported that two such issues had been resolved, namely those relating to co-funding and frozen bank accounts in Guatemala. A contractual dispute in Afghanistan and a claim relating to an out-of-country voting project in Iraq were still being addressed.

34.   The Deputy Auditor General of Ghana read out the statement of the External Auditor, as contained in document S/28/9.

35.   In the ensuing discussion, one regional group commended the Organization for its adaptation to the unprecedented conditions of the pandemic and congratulated the External Auditor and his team for their work carried out in difficult circumstances. It urged the Organization to redouble its efforts to minimize the risk of misappropriations that could harm activities for beneficiaries at the country level. It welcomed the increase in unearmarked voluntary contributions and encouraged other donors to increase their voluntary contributions to the core budget.

36.   One representative, noting that several of the External Auditor's recommendations related to aspects of the IGF and to procurement, suggested that it might be helpful for the Administration to organize a more in-depth briefing on efforts to update the Organization's procurement processes and on the progress on implementation of the IGF work plan, while another asked how the Administration intended to address the External Auditor's recommendation regarding IGF implementation.

37.   A third representative expressed support for the Organization's call for increased core funding, as discussed in the Working Group on Budget Reform. He noted that a significant part of the budget was made up of lightly earmarked funding and wondered whether that type of funding could be put towards the core budget. Perhaps countries that were reluctant to provide unearmarked funding could be encouraged to contribute core funding in that way. It was also important to consider diversifying the financing of the Organization, particularly with regard to the private sector.

38.   Two representatives announced that their governments planned to maintain or increase the amount of unearmarked funding they contributed in 2021 and the coming years, and urged other Member States to consider doing likewise.

39.   Several representatives commended the Administration for addressing the External Auditor's recommendations from the previous year and requested information on how the new recommendations would be prioritized. One encouraged the Administration to prioritize oversight and management, while another urged the Administration to focus on those recommendations that could lead to cost savings and to inform Member States of the costs associated with the implementation of priority projects.

40.   The Administration noted that with regard to procurement, many processes had been mapped out as part of the Business Transformation initiative and that some had already been updated. For instance, the system for processing purchase orders had already been rolled out across the Organization and would have an impact on the cost of projects from the start. Vendor creation, which

had previously been done by the various offices independently, had now been centralized. Nevertheless, the broader procurement process continued to be a challenge. The Administration welcomed any opportunity to brief Member States on developments in this regard, including in the context of discussions on the IGF and the Business Transformation initiative.

41.   In response to questions from the floor, the Administration explained that use of the OSI reserve was guided by Council Resolution No. 1390. Softly earmarked contributions were those that were directed towards a specific appeal or a specific country, but otherwise allowed the Organization to use the funds to address various migration issues.

42.   The Administration reported to Member States on the status of the implementation of the External Auditor's recommendations every year at the Standing Committee's second annual session.

43.   The Director General noted that, since the beginning of the reform process, an average of 30 per cent of unearmarked funding had been allocated to the IGF and the Business Transformation initiative. Those allocations had always been made transparently, identifying both the source and destination of the funding, and would continue to be made in that way. A decision would have to be taken later in the year relating to the enterprise resource planning tender process, and a financial strategy drawn up to comply with the legal obligations stemming from contracting with a service provider, even if all the funding was not in place up front. Therefore, with regard to prioritization, the picture would be clearer later in the year.

44.   The Standing Committee adopted Resolution No. 26 of 30 June 2021 on the Financial Report for the year ended 31 December 2020.

Reappointment of the External Auditor

45.   The Chairperson reminded the Standing Committee that the mandate of the External Auditor was due to expire at the end of the year and invited it to consider the document entitled Reappointment of the External Auditor for the three-year period 2022–2024 (S/28/4).

46.   The Administration said that the Auditor General of Ghana had expressed an interest in serving a third term as External Auditor. Since previous practice had allowed the appointment of the External Auditor to be renewed for up to two additional terms, the Director General had decided to propose extending the assignment of the Auditor General of Ghana for another three years. However, in recognition of the fact that other Member States had expressed interest in offering their services to the Organization, he proposed that appointments from 2025 onwards should be limited to a maximum of two terms.

47.   The Standing Committee took note of the document and recommended to the Council that it adopt the draft resolution contained therein, reappointing the Auditor General of Ghana as the IOM External Auditor for the years 2022, 2023 and 2024, and further deciding that from 2025 onwards, the appointment of External Auditors should be for a three-year period and limited to a renewal of only one additional term of three years.

48.   The Deputy Auditor General of Ghana, speaking on behalf of the Auditor General, thanked the Standing Committee for the confidence that had been placed in the Ghana Audit Service and assured Member States that it would draw on the lessons learned to provide professional auditing services in support of the Organization's objectives.

49.   The representative of Ghana thanked the Standing Committee for its confidence in the audit team.

Revision of the Programme and Budget for 2021

50.   The Standing Committee had before it the document entitled Revision of the Programme and Budget for 2021 (S/28/6) and the related draft resolution (S/28/L/3).

51.   The Administration, in introductory comments backed up by a slide presentation, highlighted the key items for decision presented in document S/28/6. The Administrative Part of the Budget had increased by CHF 946,466 due to the addition of a new Member State's assessed contribution. The assessment scale had also been revised accordingly. In line with Council Resolution 1390 of 24 November 2020, the Administration proposed to use the additional amount to fund positions in areas identified as priorities, such as the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse; results-based management; peace and security responses in the context of transition and recovery programming; and accounting and financial oversight at Headquarters and at the Manila and Panama Administrative Centres.

52.   The Operational Part of the Budget had almost doubled, increasing by about 95 per cent since the original 2020 budget had been presented at the end of 2020, to almost USD 1.8 billion. There had been increases in every service area, across all continents, and, as was customary, only projects for which there was guaranteed funding were included. In view of the current trend in level of activity, the Operational Part of the Budget appeared likely to exceed USD 2 billion by the end of the year; it was therefore anticipated that there would be no difficulty in generating the OSI target of USD 128 million. The Director General proposed to draw down USD 5.7 million from the OSI reserve for ongoing activities related to the COVID-19 pandemic and to the IGF and Business Transformation initiative.

53.   Two delegates expressed support for the Revision to the Programme and Budget for 2021 and for the proposals on how to spend the extra funding available under the Administrative Part of the Budget. That being said, IOM should not have to rely on new Member States joining the Organization to fund positions that were crucial to priority tasks. It was time to abandon the policy of zero nominal growth and to have a meaningful discussion on how to adapt the budget process to the Organization's real needs. IOM had more than doubled in size and expenditure in the past decade, but its "membership fees" had remained unchanged. As a result, the Administrative Part of the Budget had become less useful as a planning tool and the Organization as a whole more dependent on creative project management. Moreover, a budget that covered only projects with guaranteed funding was not a realistic tool for planning and prioritizing the implementation of new ideas.

54.   Several delegates and one regional group expressed support for the OSI reserve drawdown. Some of them, noting that a relatively modest amount of USD 4.7 million would be used to fund implementation in 2021 of the IGF and the Business Transformation initiative and the critical importance of both to Member States and the Organization, asked the Administration to provide clear information on any anticipated funding gaps, by when the funds would be needed and whether it planned to draw down further funding from the OSI reserve to fill them.

55.   One representative, noting that the Working Group on Budget Reform was awaiting a list of positions to be funded by the core budget, asked for further information on the selection process used for seven new positions, particularly since Member States might not be aware of what key oversight positions were not financed by core funding. She and other representatives nevertheless welcomed the creation of various positions to reinforce financial controls within the Organization and the establishment of a position to bolster coordination of IOM efforts to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse. Adequate action in that regard required a transparent and gender-mainstreamed organizational culture under the stewardship of senior management, and it was therefore appropriate for such a position to be funded as part of the core structure.

56.   One delegate expressed the hope that, in line with IOM's desire to be a cutting-edge, learning organization that invested in its staff, more resources for training would be included in future funding proposals.

57.   Another delegate asked for further information on how the COVID-19 pandemic was expected to impact the Organization's programming and expenditure in 2021.

58.   A third delegate, referring to the creation by IOM and UNHCR of the Regional Inter-Agency Coordination Platform across 17 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean and the Platform's successful fundraising efforts, asked why IOM required funding for additional projects to assist the beneficiaries concerned.

59.   The Administration, responding to the comments made, said that the COVID-19 pandemic was having a huge impact on some activities because of ongoing restrictions on movements. In some cases (e.g. visa application centres), entire programme areas had been shut down. Health assessment projects and return activities had also been severely affected. The staff made redundant as a result had been reassigned to new areas of work, such as the "First Line of Defence" programme being implemented for United Nations staff. Overall, however, the impact appeared to be negligible, as IOM had registered another record level of expenditure in 2020.

60.   Regarding the adequacy of the budget process as a planning tool, the Administration pointed out that its hands were tied by the Financial Regulations, which allowed the implementation only of activities for which there was confirmed funding, and by various Council resolutions.

61.   The Director General confirmed that the proposals to use the extra funding made available by the arrival of a new Member State were the outcome of a process of prioritization, whereby the Administration had taken into account the priorities established by the Member States. He agreed that the current budget process was not a healthy way to manage the Organization, especially since the level of project funding could fluctuate significantly from year to year. It was for that reason that a discussion had been engaged on budget reform; some of the decisions needed to guarantee the Organization's long-term sustainability would depend on the outcome of that discussion.

62.   He had exercised great caution when it came to the OSI reserve drawdown, it being impossible to gauge the ultimate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on IOM activities. Some of the most severely affected areas of activity, such as the health assessment programme, were gradually returning to previous levels, and the reassignment of staff to other endeavours meant that IOM had retained the capacity and skills needed to relaunch them. At the same time, in the coming months the Administration would have to review commitments under the Business Transformation initiative with a view to informing the Member States about funding needs for the coming three or four years. The OSI reserve drawdown would provide a safety net for financing ongoing activities, but without Member States funding the Administration would not be able to commit to the outlays required for the new enterprise resource planning system.

63.   Regarding the Regional Inter-Agency Coordination Platform, he said that IOM undertook no activities that were not aligned with its mandate. It had partnered with UNHCR to mount the Platform in response to a request from the United Nations Secretary-General, and the beneficiaries were both migrants and refugees – all human beings who deserved respect and humanitarian assistance.

64.   The Standing Committee adopted Resolution No. 27 of 30 June 2021 on the Revision of the Programme and Budget for 2021.

Presentation on IOM Headquarters organizational review

65.   The Director General introduced the document entitled IOM Headquarters organizational review (S/28/11). IOM's rapid growth had resulted in an imbalance in its core structures, and the reforms introduced at senior management level also necessitated the realignment of Headquarters structures. The IOM Headquarters organizational review, which did not affect regional or field structures, aimed to consolidate, and promote coherence between, departments. Only a limited number of new posts were envisaged, and the cost implications would be minimal.

66.   Most of the proposed adjustments were realignments of existing functions and would be made in autumn 2021, although full implementation would require a change of organizational culture and would therefore take more time. The proposed changes included the replacement of the Office of the Director General by an Executive Office and the creation of the Department of Strategic Planning and Organizational Performance – which would coordinate IGF reforms and, he hoped, increase coherence and address shortcomings – and of the Department of Peace and Development Coordination, which would allow IOM to better structure its approach to its growing recovery and development portfolio

67.   The Displacement Tracking Matrix required strengthening as it was largely funded by projects with relatively few resources; therefore the decision had been taken to bring it together with the Global Migration Data Analysis Centre under a new Global Data Institute, which would move those functions closer to the core of IOM.

68.   The changes to the Department of Migration Management, which would be renamed the Department of Programme Support and Migration Management, were driven by the desire to increase coherence and eliminate silos, for example in relation to protection. The creation of the Protection Division within the department was in no way intended to diminish IOM's humanitarian protection work, which would continue. The changes to the Department of Resources Management would allow more dedicated attention to be paid to IOM's many thousands of staff members and implementing partners, and to the growing threats to data protection.

69.   Lastly, some of the proposed adjustments were directly linked to the IGF reforms, in particular strengthening oversight functions. The aim of the budget reform process was to provide a more sustainable core structure and a related financing mechanism; further dialogue was needed with Member States in that regard and any reforms would likely have significant cost implications.

70.   In the ensuing discussion, several representatives agreed that the review was necessary. Two representatives requested information on the review process, particularly the costs involved, and one requested a more detailed organizational chart, while calling for IOM's responsiveness to be strengthened and expressing support for the Resettlement and Movement Management Division. She also requested more information on the links between the Department of Operations and Emergencies and the new Protection Division and assurances that the consolidation of protection expertise would not hinder the inclusion of protection from the start of IOM's responses. Moreover, it was essential that the restructuring did not affect the Displacement Tracking Matrix's core function of supporting the broader humanitarian community. Another representative welcomed the clear focus of the new Department of Peace and Development Coordination on prevention and would be closely following its work, in particular with regard to the operationalization of the forthcoming institutional strategy on migration, environment and climate change.

71.   In terms of breaking down silos, one delegate asked how IOM would ensure coordination between departments, particularly when they answered to different Deputy Directors General, and how it would ensure the independence of important core functions, including the Office of the

Inspector General, while another added that the Administration should periodically assess the effectiveness of the structural changes.

72. Several Member States welcomed the creation of the new departments, with one noting in particular the broadening of the scope of the Gender Coordination Unit to include diversity, while one Member State highlighted the need for good coordination between the Departments of Peace and Development Coordination, of Operations and Emergencies, and of Programme Support and Migration Management, and asked whether the creation of the Department of Peace and Development Coordination suggested that IOM would be increasingly involved in peacebuilding. She also asked whether conflict resolution and peacebuilding activities were part of IOM's existing work on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and how IOM would ensure that resources were not overstretched, that funding for humanitarian activities did not subsidize development activities and that the Organization remained focused on its added value.

73. Two delegates referred to the costs of reviewing staff grading at Headquarters, with one underscoring the need for the matter to be discussed by the relevant working group and the other highlighting the difficulty of discussing possible increases to assessed contributions in the absence of sufficient data on new positions. The latter also requested additional information on the two new positions intended to strengthen IOM's contribution to the United Nations Network on Migration and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. A third delegate expressed the hope that the additional positions would be covered by existing resources and that nationals from his country would apply in order to increase its representation among IOM staff.

74. Several Member States noted the importance of transparency with regard to the restructuring process and its total cost, with one expressing concern that the use of existing resources might limit attention to other priorities and another suggesting that IOM's current structure should be maintained until the budget for the changes was fully secured, albeit with minor changes to accommodate the introduction of the second Deputy Director General post. Another representative said that there should continue to be discussions of the topic in order to better understand the budget implications for Member States

75. Lastly, one Member State expressed support for the adjustments made following the 2019 MOPAN report and encouraged IOM to consider further implementation of the report's recommendations and to promote activities relating to innovation.

76. The Director General explained that no changes were foreseen in terms of the movement activities of the Organization and that the Resettlement and Movement Management Division would be maintained. Staff with expertise on different aspects of protection were being brought together in the hope that doing so would create synergies. Protection in different sectors would continue to be addressed in the same way, but within the framework of the new Department of Programme Support and Migration Management.

77. The Displacement Tracing Matrix had adapted rapidly to support efforts to address the COVID-19 pandemic and would continue to be closely linked to humanitarian operations. However, its data collection and analysis network was serving different purposes within IOM, and linking it more closely to the Global Migration Data Analysis Centre would improve the collection and use of data without reducing its operational capabilities. A mechanism to undertake regular reviews of the changes would be necessary.

78. Turning to the matter of costs, he recalled that the budget reform process had begun with the identification of four main streams, the last of which was the identification of the changes required to implement the IGF. A total cost for that stream had not yet been calculated because it depended to

a large extent on the decisions made during the reform process. Consultation with departments at Headquarters and in the field had begun on the potential gaps, needs and savings linked to IGF implementation. Nevertheless, the changes proposed under the Headquarters review were very limited, and so too were the related costs; they could be absorbed by IOM's existing budgets.

79.   The structure of the regional offices was inconsistent because they had grown in line with their own projects. While that demonstrated their flexibility, a streamlined structure would be developed. Responding to a question regarding the role of the Senior Coordinator on the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment, he said that the Senior Coordinator – rather than a specific unit – would be responsible for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse activities and relevant training, which was a cross-cutting responsibility for the entire Organization that should not be confused with the role of the Office of the Inspector General, which was fully independent and investigated allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse.

80.   Flattening IOM's organizational structure would be the first step to breaking down institutional silos. The structure proposed by the Headquarters review would require IOM to develop a culture of working that ensured cross-cutting, horizontal cooperation at all levels. While IOM acted as coordinator of the United Nations Network on Migration, implementation of the Global Compact was the responsibility of the Member States, with IOM's support. The two new positions created in that connection aimed to strengthen IOM's role as the Network's coordinator while allowing it to play an active role in it.

81.   He agreed that balanced geographical representation in the Organization was a key issue. An independent consultant was in the process of assessing the issues of imbalance and a survey was ongoing. One of the changes proposed in the organizational review was to broaden the scope of the Gender Coordination Unit to encompass issues of disability, race and inclusion, so as to address any potential shortcomings.

82.   The humanitarian, development and peace nexus was widely discussed in the United Nations system, but was far from being effectively implemented. The lack of linkages between the three prongs of the nexus was evident in IOM's day-to-day work, and the Organization was therefore endeavouring to develop a coherent approach. The success of protection, assistance and development efforts was predicated on an environment of security and peace, which was why the Organization, principally with the support of some key donors, had a large portfolio of projects focusing on transition and recovery, community stabilization, community dialogue, the prevention of extremism, and reintegration.

83.   The Standing Committee took note of the document entitled IOM Headquarters organizational review (S/28/11).

Update on plans for the IOM Headquarters building

84.   The Administration delivered a slide presentation introducing document S/28/12, entitled Plans for the IOM Headquarters building: update 5. The Director General's study loan application to the Government of Switzerland had been formally endorsed by the Swiss Federal Council and would be submitted to the Swiss Parliament at the end of 2021. Upon completion of that process, the Organization would sign a contract for the study loan in the amount of CHF 5.7 million, kick-starting the building project. The study loan was just part of the total budget amount; IOM would have to apply for the remaining amount of CHF 66.3 million for the construction loan at a later date. The Administration was in the process of preparing for the launch of an architectural competition, planned for 2022. That included drawing up a shortlist of firms that would be invited to tender, by assessing them according to a number of criteria. Several issues requiring specific consideration had been

identified through engagement with the local authorities, including the adjacent buildings with which the Organization shared outdoor spaces and installations, including heating facilities. Lastly, the Administration was also working to revise the Organization's land lease agreement, which would need to account for any change in the building's footprint.

85.   One representative welcomed the inclusion of the development of a disability inclusion strategy and sustainability strategies for the project, in coordination with experts. He requested further details from the Administration on what the strategies entailed thus far, as well as on diversity and inclusion in building standards. He encouraged IOM to incorporate the principles of accessibility and universal design into the disability inclusion strategy, and to describe developments in respect of the strategy in future updates on the Headquarters building project.

86.   The Standing Committee took note of document S/28/12.

Assessment scale for 2022

87.   The Administration introduced the document entitled Proposed adjustment to the IOM assessment scale for 2022 (S/28/3) and noted that the IOM assessment scale was fully equated to that of the United Nations; however, owing to the timing of the issuance of the United Nations assessment scale, there was a one-year time lag in the application of the new scale at IOM. The United Nations scale for 2021 would therefore be applied at IOM in 2022. The proposed scale for 2022 had been updated with the addition of the one new Member State that had joined the Organization to date in 2021.

88.   The Standing Committee approved the IOM assessment scale for 2022, as illustrated in document S/28/3.

Report of the Chairperson of the Working Group on Budget Reform

89.   The representative of Mexico, speaking on behalf of the Chairperson of the Working Group on Budget Reform gave an overview of the work of the Working Group. During its most recent meeting, the Working Group had discussed the options presented by the Administration on rethinking IOM's core funding structure. The Director General had highlighted that the Organization's highly projectized funding and the policy of zero nominal growth made it difficult to finance the core structure and could affect its ability to respond to increasingly complex migration challenges. The Administration had proposed increasing assessed contributions over a one-, three- or five-year period, as well as encouraging an increase in unearmarked voluntary contributions.

90.   There had been general agreement on the need to increase the regular budget and many delegations had indicated a wish for further information and discussion before taking a decision on the question of increasing assessed contributions. Several delegations had requested additional information on cost-saving measures and efforts to avoid duplication, as well as information on the efficient use of existing resources. The Administration had also been requested to provide a clearer timeline for the discussions and the steps that would be needed to implement the decision, once taken. A number of delegations, largely from developing countries, had expressed a preference for a broader discussion that could identify alternative funding sources.

91.   The Working Group was due to hold its next meeting in September and the Administration was in the process of preparing a document responding to the issues that had been raised.

92.   During the ensuring discussion, the representatives of many Member States said that they recognized the Organization's core funding challenges and welcomed further details and discussion of the matter. Several representatives also requested that the Administration provide a road map detailing how the process would be managed going forward, including whether a decision was anticipated at the upcoming Council meeting. It was important for a decision to be taken sooner rather than later.

93.   One representative said that although there was no easy solution, a collective and equitable approach that was both predictable and sustainable would be the most beneficial, both to the Organization and to Member States. However, the models that had been shared left many of the Organization's priorities, including the Business Transformation initiative, largely unfunded. There needed to be a longer-term vision of the funding challenges that included the realization of IGF-related initiatives and other one-time expenses that had been identified.

94.   Another representative said that it would be useful to have more details about the specific gaps IOM was seeking to address, including a clear prioritization of those needs, since the absence of that information could delay any decision. She was also keen to ensure that the Business Transformation initiative, which included many of the Organization's most urgent needs, was financially secure, so requested that those costs be included, even though some were one-off costs.

95.   Three representatives stressed the importance of demonstrating that existing funding was being used as efficiently as possible, with one noting that it was also critical to discuss what functions should be covered by core resources, before taking any decision on providing additional core funding. One representative also noted that the IGF and the Business Transformation initiative played an important part in demonstrating improved efficiency in the use of funds and impact in the field. In that regard, another representative recommended that the "second line of defence" issues should be given priority.

96.   Two representatives observed that any increase in assessed contributions would be difficult to accept, in the light of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and global economic crisis and one urged the Administration also to properly explore alternative sources of funding.

97.   The Director General acknowledged that there was a need for a more detailed picture of the financial needs of the Organization in order to proceed with budget reform efforts and said that the Administration would provide such an assessment as soon as possible. The Administration appreciated the decision that had been taken to provide more flexible use of the OSI reserve, noting that those funds had already been allocated in accordance with the applicable rules. While the OSI reserve could not be used to pay for recurring costs, it was useful in supporting the Business Transformation initiative, the full funding for which had now been secured for 2021. However, further costs lay ahead later in the year, particularly with regard to launching the tendering process for the enterprise resource planning system; such one-time costs did not form part of the longer-term budget reform process and so would not be included.

98.   He agreed that efficiency was important. Indeed, the highly projectized nature of the Organization's work meant that there was a great deal of transparency in how money was spent on various projects. Nonetheless, economies could still be made, in particular with regard to procurement and the supply chain, for which the IGF process envisaged improvements through digitalization. The Administration was also considering a number of ways to improve regional coordination and strengthen the role of the regional offices, which could improve efficiency and reduce spending. However, the process was not straightforward and needed to be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

99.   Responding to the requests for a road map, he said that he did not expect any budget reforms to be implemented before the 2022 budget cycle, but the rest of the year should be used to provide all the relevant information requested and foster the conditions necessary for taking a decision with regard to future budgets.

100.   The Standing Committee took note of the presentation and the comments made by Member States.

Report of the Chairperson of the Working Group on IOM Partnerships, Governance and Organizational Priorities

101.   The Chairperson of the Working Group on IOM Partnerships, Governance and Organizational Priorities introduced his report in document S/28/10. The Working Group, the successor to the Working Group on IOM–UN Relations and Related Issues, had met twice since the previous Standing Committee session, to discuss three issues: the composition of the IOM Council Bureau, with a view to ensuring transparent and inclusive representation of all IOM Member States; the preparation, in consultation with Member States, of an annual programme of work for the Standing Committee; and IOM participation in United Nations inter-agency mechanisms.

102.   Regarding the need to ensure equitable access to the Bureau for all Member States, the Administration had prepared a paper outlining three options. Following the two Working Group meetings, it had become clear that option 3 was not supported and that options 1 (the UNHCR model) and 2 (the United Nations General Assembly model) bore further consideration. In the absence of a consensus on the issue, the Chairperson had circulated a letter and a non-paper on 28 June 2021, to summarize the discussions on the topic and inform further discussion at the current meeting with a view to reaching a consensus at a later date. It was now recommended that consultations should continue; that the Working Group should aim to meet in September 2021 and work collaboratively towards a decision for consideration at the Twenty-ninth Session of the Standing Committee; and that the 112th Session of the Council could adopt a resolution based on the Standing Committee's recommendations, in order to amend the Rules of Procedures of the Council as necessary.

103.   The members of the Standing Committee agreed that it was important for all Member States to be able to participate in the Council Bureau. They would therefore welcome a proposal aimed at ensuring equitable participation of all Member States on the basis of regional representation. They further agreed that they should pursue their deliberations, analyse the situation with a view to taking account of all concerns and reach a decision by consensus in a timely fashion, given the urgency of the matter

104.   Several representatives expressed a preference for the United Nations General Assembly model, which would involve establishing five regional groups at IOM, along the lines of the regional groups of the United Nations General Assembly, thus creating a third position of vice-chairperson of the Council. Although that model involved amending the Rules of Procedure of the Council, those amendments could be approved in a resolution adopted by a simple majority of Member States, as the Legal Counsel had confirmed. The reasons for their preference were as follows: with IOM's growing membership, a five-member Bureau would afford greater opportunities for all to be represented; IOM's relationship to the United Nations made that model the most convenient; and enhanced Member State participation in the Bureau would lead to greater buy-in in the decision-making process.

105.   Several other representatives preferred the UNHCR model, whereby IOM would retain four modified regional groups based mainly on geographical location, and which would entail no changes to the Rules of Procedure of the Council. The UNHCR model reflected migration corridors and was thus

better suited to the discussion of migration issues, which were inherently geographical in nature. Two delegates pointed out that the United Nations General Assembly model would remove them from the region of which they saw themselves as an integral part.

106.   Some representatives said that, their preference for one or the other model notwithstanding, they were willing to be flexible and work with the model on which a consensus could be achieved.

107.   One delegate suggested that a pragmatic solution to the issue of representation, one that would enable the membership to take advantage of everyone's talents, would be to have the Bureau appoint by consensus the representatives of individual Member States to chair IOM working groups.

108.   Another delegate said that the Working Group should also consider the matter of rotation. In the current "ladder" model, the same Member States were represented on the Bureau for four years. For an organization with such a large membership, a shorter rotation period would provide an opportunity for other Member States to be part of the Bureau and play a stronger role. While it was true that the ladder model allowed Bureau members to become more familiar with the work of the Organization, the representatives appointed to the Bureau tended to be transferred before the end of their term and were replaced by successors who did not have the same experience of IOM.

109.   The Chairperson of the Working Group considered that the Member States should initially focus on the composition of the Bureau, rather than on the mechanics of ladder accession, which could be considered at a later stage.

110.   Regarding the Standing Committee's annual programme of work, one delegate said that she would welcome discussions on an agenda driven by efficiencies and focused on feedback from oversight functions.

111.   The Director General agreed that any decision on the composition of the Bureau should be reached by consensus and pledged the Administration's support for the Member States' discussion on the subject. In order to expedite matters, in particular if the Rules of Procedure of the Council had to be amended, and given that Member States had expressed their hope that a decision could be adopted at the next session of the Council, he suggested that Member States, in particular those that were currently not members of a regional group, might consider engaging in dialogue with each other with a view to reaching a conclusion at the Working Group's next meeting.

112.   The Standing Committee took note of document S/28/10, entitled Report of the Chairperson of the Working Group on IOM Partnerships, Governance and Organizational Priorities.

Statement by the Chairperson of the Global Staff Association Committee

113.   The Chairperson of the GSAC joined Member States in paying tribute to the former Director General, William Lacy Swing, who had been a great ally of the Staff Association and strong supporter of staff welfare.

114.   Since GSAC had been established in 2018, its priority had been to develop a three-year strategy focusing on three pillars: policy advocacy with an impact; staff empowerment for rights protection; and individual staff assistance. He thanked the Administration for the positive relationship that had been built, based on trust, mutual respect and close collaboration.

115.   With regard to its first strategic pillar, the Committee had focused on advocating policies likely to have the highest impact on improving staff members' employment relationship with the Organization, based on analysis of good practices from other United Nations agencies and structured

staff feedback. The information gathered had then been used as a basis for the formulation of official GSAC positions with concrete recommendations for the Administration on a wide range of topics, including performance management, unified parental leave, staff development and learning, mobility and rotation, education grants and COVID-19-related staff retention policies. That collaborative relationship with the Administration had led to a number of new policies and programmes being introduced as well as to a greater understanding of staff needs by the Administration, improved working conditions for staff worldwide, representation of staff members' views in the policy development and revision processes, and increased awareness of actions being taken throughout the United Nations system.

116.   The second strategic pillar – sharing key information and guidance with staff and facilitating communication to reach staff working in different regions on various matters of interest – had increased staff awareness of their rights and of the deadlines for the various relevant legal and administrative procedures. For example, close collaboration with the Administration had resulted in the hiring of external experts who were in the process of conducting a six-month review of racial equality and equity in the Organization. Their findings would be used to develop a five-year anti-racism strategy and action plan, which would include annual benchmarks and training for senior managers. Another key element of staff empowerment was strengthening the network of National Staff Association Committees, which had grown in number from 37 to 56 since 2018 and which provided front-line assistance to promote the rights of national staff around the world. In addition, staff protection had been enhanced through access to legal insurance coverage, which had been made available to national staff who were Global Staff Association members for the first time in IOM history.

117.   The final pillar was individual staff assistance, through which the Committee provided guidance and referred staff to the different types of assistance offered by the Organization, as appropriate, including the Ombudsperson – with whom the Committee worked closely – as well as external legal advisors. The vast majority of cases had been resolved through informal means. Since 2018, GSAC had supported 352 individual cases, with consultations with the external legal advisors only necessary in 147 cases. Of those, 28 cases had received legal insurance coverage. In order to streamline case workflow, an automated case management system had been launched in 2020, which had the additional benefit of collecting data on common issues and trends. GSAC also managed funds, including a compassion fund that provided financial support to families in case of the death of a staff member or IOM-affiliated personnel who met certain eligibility criteria.

118.   In conclusion, he wished the incoming GSAC Chairperson and the new cohort of regional representatives, who would take up their positions in July, well for their work in the years ahead. He also thanked the GSAC Secretariat and the existing 16 regional representatives for their work over the past three years – they had all agreed to serve an additional year beyond their initial two-year terms as a result of the pandemic, which demonstrated extraordinary commitment.

119.   The Director General thanked the Chairperson of the Global Staff Association Committee for his commitment to constant dialogue with the Administration throughout his term. Although they had not always agreed, they shared a common concern for dialogue and for exchanging perspectives, and he always had the best interests of the Organization in mind. The Administration shared his concerns for staff well-being and stability, since IOM was nothing without its staff.

120.   The Standing Committee took note of the statement by the Chairperson of the Global Staff Association Committee and of the comments made by the Director General.

Exchange of views on items proposed by the membership

(a)   Migration Information and Data Analysis System: future scope and priorities

121.   The Administration introduced document S/28/8, on the future scope and priorities of the Migration Information and Data Analysis System (MIDAS), the border management system developed by IOM to enable governments to more effectively monitor those entering or exiting a country by air, land or sea, while providing a sound statistical basis for migration policy planning. The introduction was supplemented with a slide presentation and with a video showcasing MIDAS implementation in the Marshall Islands, Nigeria and Paraguay.

122.   MIDAS was currently used in 24 countries and would be deployed to at least 10 more in 2021 and 2022. Its sustained growth as a comprehensive, rights-based border management system required further priority-setting in three areas – partnerships, consolidation and innovation. The future scope of MIDAS had thus been defined to include the following suggested activities: stronger government involvement and support for MIDAS implementation through the sharing of expertise between countries; the establishment of a voluntary technical working group on border management with IOM serving as the secretariat; and exploration of how MIDAS could be made available to more Member States, through either public-private partnerships or fee-recuperation models, to reinforce State ownership of the system.

123.   Several Member States commended IOM on its development of MIDAS, which they considered an efficient and cost-effective tool for the effective border management needed to ensure safe, orderly and regular cross-border movements, boost economic development and trade and address national and international security challenges. The system was innovative, consistent with the Sustainable Development Goals and respected the right to privacy. It had proven its value in enabling effective monitoring of those entering and exiting national territories, while providing sound statistical analyses to support national and regional migration policy planning. It thus not only strengthened the capacity of immigration and border authorities, it also helped to improve border surveillance and provided solid information for evidence-based policy formulation and border authority interventions under existing law and human rights standards.

124.   One representative said that, thanks to MIDAS, his country's national migrant registration system had been completely automated and extended to incorporate biometric data; it had also been linked to other systems, such as that of INTERPOL. As a result, migrant processing had been facilitated and the country's national security capacity greatly enhanced.

125.   Another representative said that MIDAS had been used, with technical assistance from IOM, to register around 165,000 migrants in his country, heightening their protection and facilitating their access to humanitarian visas, and to collect data on their socioeconomic situation with a view to drawing up appropriate policies.

126.   Several delegates, while acknowledging the importance of partnerships, consolidation and innovation for expanding MIDAS in the future, said that partnerships should be formed beyond the United Nations system and that consolidation should enhance not only border management but also interoperability and capacity-building opportunities in other related areas, such as policy or legal frameworks. The benefits of MIDAS did not preclude the need to strengthen immigration authorities' legal, technical and operational capacities in the area of border management and data use, and IOM should therefore continue to invest in, for example, the African Capacity Building Centre. Lastly, while innovation offered new possibilities, for example for the use of privately held data, consideration should also be given to privacy, security, and commercial and ethical sensitivity issues, and scientific

and methodological challenges, and any innovative measures should follow the highest global data protection standards to ensure no digital harm.

127.   One delegate noted that, in the current fiscally austere environment, partnerships between providers of border management technology and training providers were vital if vulnerable countries were to be expected to secure their borders and protect their citizens. She endorsed the IOM approach, which was to ensure that data collected by border management information systems were for the exclusive use of legitimate law enforcement and immigration authorities, available for national authorities investigations, screening and analysis; and which offered security through data integrity.

128.   A second delegate encouraged IOM to pursue its efforts to consolidate MIDAS interoperability with other existing tools, such as the UNCTAD ASYCUDA (Automated System for Customs Data) product for customs management and the UNOCT advance passenger information system. In addition, the MIDAS health module, aimed at integrating health information into border management systems, would be critical to managing the next pandemic without having to completely end all cross-border travel.

129.   With regard to the proposal to establish an informal and voluntary technical working group on border management, one delegate vouched for the benefit of technical exchanges between Member States and expressed interest in participating in the group.

130.   One representative asked how IOM would support MIDAS sustainability and ensure that its roll-out was sustainable in terms of climate change. Another asked whether the system would resolve the problem of facilitating mobility in the context of a pandemic whose impact varied according to location, and what additional measures were required to re-establish mobility.

131.   In response to the Member States' comments, the Administration said that IOM was proactively forming partnerships outside the United Nations system. Its proposed working group would examine how mobility and border management could be addressed by harnessing IOM's broad experience, harnessing IOM's broad experience in a number of areas, including health, protection and border management, thereby helping Member States devise a common approach for future pandemics.

132.   The Director General said that IOM had been monitoring the introduction of health criteria into border management since the start of the pandemic. The issues it had encountered were not purely technological; the objectives, standards and criteria applicable to all modes of movement had to be agreed, and that level of international cooperation posed a major challenge. Developing countries must not be left behind in the reopening of borders. The international community had no single global platform to facilitate debate on the future of border controls, and IOM encouraged Member States to identity the most appropriate forum for that debate.

(b)   Adopting a comprehensive approach to internal displacement: operationalizing the triple nexus

133.   The Administration introduced the document entitled Adopting a comprehensive approach to internal displacement: operationalizing the triple nexus (S/28/7), which it supplemented with a slide presentation. IOM, whose internal displacement operations spanned the entire crisis continuum, was present on the ground worldwide to support work across the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding nexus, known as the triple nexus. One tool it used to that end was the Migration Crisis Operational Framework, which helped to identify stakeholders and vulnerable persons, contexts and needs, and to tailor IOM's response to each country's context.

134.   IOM responses to internal displacement, which continued to outstrip available solutions and took a heavy socioeconomic toll, were multi-year, multidisciplinary and involved society as a whole. Its community stabilization activities helped operationalize the triple nexus and were neither specifically humanitarian nor developmental, with strong links to resilience-building and peacebuilding. IOM aimed to augment national systems so that societies and communities could function.

135.   The triple nexus required the participation of, and accountability to, the populations concerned. It also required a context-based approach, and the delegated structure of IOM country offices allowed IOM to be present long before and after crises, working closely with other United Nations agencies in United Nations country teams.

136.   It was generally agreed that partnerships and cooperation were of great importance in addressing internal displacement and operationalizing the nexus. One regional group welcomed IOM's cooperation efforts and highlighted the need for system-wide responses, including cooperation among United Nations agencies. Operationalization of the triple nexus would require a common vision and cultural change in organizations, and those involved must coordinate while adhering to their respective mandates. IOM's flexibility and structure, if properly coordinated, could facilitate a coherent and inclusive operationalization of the triple nexus. It encouraged stakeholders to do more joint planning and risk/vulnerability analyses. One Member State said that questions remained regarding how best to implement the triple nexus.

137.   One representative noted that investment was required to ensure the participation of internally displaced persons, local entities and community-based organizations; offered to facilitate contact between IOM and other partners; and asked what added value IOM contributed to the United Nations system and other development actors working on internal displacement. Two representatives requested further information on how IOM had engaged with the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement and on the steps to be taken once the Panel's recommendations had been published.

138.   The representative of one regional group expressed support for IOM action to ensure coherence in its own triple nexus programming through the Migration Crisis Operational Framework, which, as one Member State noted, could be used alongside other key IOM policies to address contemporary patterns of internal human mobility. Data were key in that regard. One Member State encouraged wider use of the Displacement Tracing Matrix and requested information on existing cooperation between organizations on data and data-sharing; on what, in IOM's view, the peace component of the triple nexus comprised; and what IOM's position was in relation to donors and other agencies in terms of the peace component and the role played by peace in its broader planning.

139.   One representative said that IOM should analyse contexts and act with conflict-sensitivity, so as to avoid undermining peace. The representative of one regional group stressed the importance of preventing and addressing the root causes of vulnerability, fragility and conflict, including by considering the effects of climate change and environmental disasters. One Member State observed that IOM's new approach should take into account specific contexts, particularly with regard to protection for women, girls and young people.

140.   One representative stressed that the involvement of internally displaced persons in developing and implementing durable solutions was an important part of operationalizing the triple nexus and must be reflected in peacebuilding. Another said that Member States bore primary responsibility for assisting those residing within their borders who were affected by crisis, and that IOM could provide support in that regard. The implementation of existing regulatory frameworks on internal displacement must be strengthened.

141.	In response to the Member States' comments, the Administration said that IOM's work with other organizations included co-chairing the Capacity for Disaster Reduction Initiative (CADRI). IOM was – in collaboration with the World Food Programme – leading a sub-working group within the Inter-Agency Standing Committee to examine how humanitarian action could improve peacebuilding and to develop a toolkit to enhance work on peace as part of the triple nexus.

142.	The Director General said that IOM had provided specific examples of its work on internal displacement to the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement. It had made clear to the Panel that it wished to focus primarily on durable solutions and data coordination. The former would be generated by linking humanitarian assistance to development, peace and security, and could be found where immediate interventions met measures to address the root causes of displacement. He agreed that solutions must be context-specific and involve internally displaced persons themselves, and that countries must take ownership of the issue. The many successful concrete solutions adopted by IOM in a number of countries must be considered in response to situations of protracted internal displacement. Alternative livelihoods must be sought for internally displaced persons unable to return to their regions of origin, along with urban planning solutions for regions of destination and measures to forge links between internally displaced persons and the communities hosting them.

143.	A coordination mechanism existed to facilitate dialogue among the United Nations agencies that collected data on internally displaced persons, but such coordination must be strengthened to avoid duplications and ensure data coherence. IOM's approach to internally displaced persons was driven by its capacity, rather than its mandate, and he hoped that the conclusions of the High-Level Panel would allow IOM to focus on mobilizing its existing capacities to find solutions, rather than engaging in theoretical debate on mandates.

144.	The Standing Commission took note of the documents entitled Migration information and data analysis system: future scope and priorities (S/28/8) and Adopting a comprehensive approach to internal displacement: operationalizing the triple nexus (S/28/7), and of the comments made by Member States.

Update on IOM institutional strategy on migration, environment and climate change

145.	The Administration gave a slide presentation providing information about the Organization's new institutional strategy on migration, environment and climate change. The new strategy was a response to the ever-increasing relevance of the environmental and climate-related drivers of contemporary migration, in the context of several other international processes that had already linked the topics and provided anchorage. It was also a development of IOM's role both as the United Nations agency on migration and as the coordinator of the United Nations Network on Migration, as well as part of the system-wide approach to the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular their implementation at country level. IOM had been working in that thematic area for 30 years, so the issues were not new; rather, the strategy was a way to enhance action by scaling up pilot projects that had already been tested and which had great potential.

146.	The development of the strategy had included a wide consultative process, which had reached out to regional offices and Member States, as well as to civil society and academia. There had also been an external evaluation of the IOM's existing work, to take stock of its added value and guide future action.

147.	The strategy outlined the six main principles of action: committing to a rights-based approach; promoting an innovative and effective approach to migration governance and practice; adopting a gender-responsive approach; implementing a migrant-centred and inclusive approach; promoting a human security approach; and supporting policy coherence and enhancing partnerships.

148.   The three institutional strategic objectives had been reformulated, using language from the Sustainable Development Goals and the Global Compact for Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration. The first objective – to develop solutions for people to move – was at the heart of IOM's mandate and focused on innovative migration policy and practice and preparing for future trends. The second objective – to develop solutions for people on the move – related to the provision of assistance and protection for migrants and displaced people, including work on international migration law and humanitarian work, including links to trafficking in disaster situations. The third objective – to develop solutions for people to stay – was about partnerships with key environmental actors, enabling people to stay in their places of origin if they wanted, through investment in climate action and through building resilience. As a whole, the Organization's work formed a virtuous circle, since it included evidence, policy and operational work, which all fed into one another. That had provided the guiding vision of the strategy.

149.   New elements of the strategy included: an increased focus on the link to the humanitarian, development and peace nexus; greater focus on the positive dimensions of migration; a more comprehensive approach to displacement; the inclusion of slow-onset processes driving migration; strengthening work with urban and local governments; and lastly, the lessons that were still being learned about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on human mobility and vulnerability. IOM had four priority areas of engagement for future action: its migration policy role, its operational role, its role as a knowledge provider, and its role as convener.

150.   Moving forward, a guidance paper would be drawn up to outline the roll-out of the strategy, in alignment with other IOM regional and thematic strategies. Work had already begun to collaborate with a large number of partners, including UNHCR.

151.   During the ensuing discussion, the representative of several Member States commended IOM for its forward-thinking efforts to improve understanding and address migration and forced displacement related to climate change. One representative recalled that the recent International Dialogue on Migration had highlighted the matter and provided impetus for collective action. Another noted that the strategy provided a road map for engagement in policy dialogue and integration of the topic into existing humanitarian portfolios. Effective implementation should help States build resilience and support them in addressing the challenges accompanying natural disasters.

152.   A third representative noted that operationalizing the strategy would contribute to the advancement of the humanitarian, development and peace nexus, which required a paradigm shift towards prevention and resolution rather than on managing situations of forced displacement. In particular, she supported the third strategic objective focusing on developing solutions for people to stay.

153.   In recognizing IOM's leadership role on the subject, a further representative noted that the upcoming International Migration Review Forum in 2022 would provide an opportunity to take stock and discuss potential future climate actions that could contribute to minimizing the adverse drivers of climate-related migration as well as the advancement of safer and more regular migration globally. She also stressed the importance of a gender-responsive approach to migration governance and thanked IOM for its continued support in that regard.

154.   Several representatives also commended the outgoing Head of the Migration, Environment and Climate Change Division, and her team, for their work.

155.   The Director General, responding to the comments made, said that he was focused on raising awareness of the issue at the forthcoming session of the United Nations Climate Change Conference. It was important to boost the visibility of the issue in international debate, because debate often

focused on what would happen in 15 or 20 years, rather than on the people who were already suffering as a result of climate change. Solutions needed to include prevention and mitigation efforts, not just humanitarian assistance. The United Nations Network on Migration had also included a new work stream on climate change and migration, and the Administration would indeed try to incorporate elements of the topic into the debate at the International Migration Review Forum.

156.   The Standing Committee took note of the presentation and the comments made by Member States and the Administration.

Report on IOM response to migration crises

157.   The Administration presented its report on the IOM response to migration crises in a slide presentation.

158.   Ongoing conflict, rising hunger and the effects of climate change had all converged with the COVID-19 pandemic to create an unparalleled situation, resulting in a significant increase in the number of people requiring humanitarian assistance. In 2020, the figure had been nearly 168 million people, rising by 40 per cent in 2021 to over 235 million. In addition, 40.5 million people had been recorded as newly internally displaced in 2020 – the highest figure in a decade. In response, IOM had adjusted and increased its operational capacities, reaching over 37 million people in 110 countries with its crisis and post-crisis programming. Expenditure on operations and emergency programming had totalled USD 1.3 billion, representing a 7 per cent increase compared to 2019. IOM also held coordination roles in 131 platforms covering 56 countries.

159.   With regard to humanitarian preparedness and response, IOM had reached 2.6 million people living in more than 1,700 sites in 28 countries through its camp coordination and camp management operations. It had also provided water, sanitation and hygiene services to 21.5 million people and delivered shelter and non-food items to 4.6 million people. The number of people supported through cash-based interventions had increased by 77 per cent to 1.6 million. Displacement Tracking Matrix operations had tracked and monitored the movements and needs of over 29.4 million IDPs, 20.8 million IDP returnees and 5.4 million returnees from abroad, as well as collecting and analysing data on population mobility in 86 countries. Such data had been used in 80 per cent of humanitarian needs overviews and humanitarian response plans that were developed in 2020. The Organization also participated in 34 steering committees or technical working groups on protection within the IASC system, as well as managing 12 humanitarian hubs in 5 countries: Bangladesh, Central African Republic, Nigeria, South Sudan and Yemen.

160.   IOM's transition and recovery work had reached 4.3 million people in 91 countries and regions in 2020. Notably, more than half of the active projects were multi-year projects. The Organization's transition and recovery portfolio had grown substantially, with 151 new projects totalling USD 415 million over the past year.

161.   With regard to resettlement and movement operations, IOM had provided support for the international movement of over 118,000 individuals in 165 countries. In addition, the Humanitarian Assistance to Stranded Migrants Fund had enabled the Organization to assist 474 individuals between 2019 and 2020. Strengthening accountability to affected populations in resettlement operations had been a priority in 2020, and a process had been initiated to establish feedback mechanisms across all operations. A mileage fund mechanism had also been established, which enabled IOM to redeem accrued mileage from airline travel to obtain tickets for migrants. A data protection principles training course had also been launched.

162.   Emergency health programming had been rapidly scaled up in response to the pandemic, with projects running in 40 countries, as well as emergency COVID-19 interventions in 140 countries. Key achievements included the deployment of over 1,000 mobile health teams, training almost 13,000 health workers in communicable disease outbreaks, vaccinating more than 850,000 people, supporting more than 1,000 points of entry, and conducting almost 110,000 COVID-19 tests. It was important to note that more than one third of Humanitarian Response Plan countries recorded more COVID-19 cases in the first four months of 2021 than in all of 2020. The pandemic had demonstrated the need for strong investment in global health security and highlighted the link between mobility and health. The returns of millions of people to areas already facing pre-COVID-19 crises had increased social tensions and community cohesion issues. IOM aimed to help mitigate the multifaceted humanitarian impact of the pandemic in a number of ways.

163.   Migrants were among the most vulnerable during conflicts and natural disasters, and large-scale mixed flows could create conditions requiring humanitarian assistance. IOM was therefore leading the collective strategic planning to respond to the needs of migrants in the Horn of Africa and Yemen, as well as working with UNHCR as co-lead of the 2021 Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan for refugees and migrants from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, covering 17 countries. In total, IOM had a leadership or co-leadership role in 17 platforms relating to mixed migration, an increase from 10 in 2018, including task forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Djibouti, Haiti, Libya and Turkey.

164.   In terms of policies, strategies and guidance, in September 2020, IOM had initiated a process to revitalize the Migration Crisis Operational Framework, due to the rapidly changing internal environment and the increased responsibilities of the Organization. Progress had also been made to institutionalize IOM's commitment to the United Nations Human Rights Due Diligence Policy, which would be issued as an instruction notice with accompanying reference tools. An accountability to affected populations framework training course had been launched in 2020 and more than one thousand staff members had already completed the course. With regard to data, the conceptualization phase had been completed for the internal displacement data strategy, which outlined a strategic path for addressing the challenges of internal displacement data to better support IDP communities. Progress had also been made in the development of Displacement Tracking Matrix standards, documenting best practices and minimum implementation requirements. The first iteration of the standards would be made available in 2021. An internal operational note on preventing violent extremism had been published, providing guidance on strategic issues arising from the development and implantation of programmes. Resources had also been developed to facilitate the integration of conflict sensitivity practices at IOM missions.

165.   Within the framework of the IASC, IOM remained active, consistently advocating for the needs of migrants and displaced populations in crisis-affected settings. IOM had supported the development of critical guidance in a number of areas, including the scaling up of COVID-19 preparedness and response operations in camps and camp-like settings. Together with OCHA and UNHCR, IOM had also worked on the revision of the resident and humanitarian coordinator handbook. IOM had also contributed to a range of IASC initiatives including on preventing and responding to gender-based violence, protection advocacy, COVID-19 vaccination roll-out, and combating racism and racial discrimination in the humanitarian sector. In addition, IOM continued to lead global efforts in terms of protection from sexual exploitation and abuse.

166.   Partnerships and collaborative initiatives were important elements of crisis response. For example, IOM continued to be an active participant in the Capacity for Disaster Reduction Initiative, taking the position as co-chair with UNDP in January 2021. Alongside the United Nations Population Fund, IOM also co-chaired the Call to Action International Organization Working Group, which was working to transform the way that gender-based violence was addressed in humanitarian action.

167.   The IOM Global Crisis Response Platform, launched in early 2020, had been further developed. The Platform provided donors and partners with an overview of the Organization's planning in priority responses and associated funding needs. Confirmed funding would be shown on the Platform later in 2021, which would provide an overview of funding gaps and recognition of donor contributions.

168.   The Migration Emergency Funding Mechanism enabled the Organization to provide loans to IOM missions to bridge the funding gap between the onset of an emergency and the receipt of donor funding. Nine missions had received loans in 2020 and three in 2021. The Mechanism was funded through voluntary contributions and had a critically low balance of USD 684,808.

169.   The Standing Committee took note of the presentation.

Report on the IOM Development Fund

170.   The Administration gave a slide presentation introducing document S/28/5 (IOM Development Fund – Final report: 1 January to 31 December 2020). It was pleased to report that USD 21 million had been made available to the Fund in 2020 to support developing Member States. It thanked the Governments of Austria, Belgium and Sweden for their generous earmarked contributions, which had been a welcome top-up to the OSI funding that was available to the Fund.

171.   The projects approved during 2020 included a wide variety of innovative initiatives covering various thematic areas, as well as replications of successful past initiatives. Out of the ten IOM initiatives selected as Sustainable Development Goals good practices, four had been initiated with support from the Fund. Another initiative that had been upscaled by the Migration MPTF had been piloted by the Fund in southern Africa.

172.   The Fund's public relations and fundraising five-year strategy and action plan had been updated, with implementation delayed as a result of the pandemic. However, the Fund had continued to be active on social media and the campaigns would restart in 2021.

173.   The reviews of past projects carried out in 2020 had focused on the areas of counter-trafficking, protection and assistance for vulnerable migrants and regularization projects. A booklet had also been produced highlighting a variety of innovative projects, many of which had been upscaled. Those reviews, as well as the findings of the ex-post evaluations, were available on the IOM Development Fund website.

174.   A booklet on results-based management and the Fund had also been shared with all Member States. The results-based management approach had been central to all aspects of Fund management throughout the project cycle. The booklet featured selected projects demonstrating the impact of the results-based management approach.

175.   The Standing Committee viewed a short film demonstrating the IOM Development Fund's work to promote and support entrepreneurship through collaboration at a global level with other United Nations agencies to develop an inter-agency policy guide on entrepreneurship, which offered practical guidance to policymakers and development partners. In particular, it showcased a project in Dominica that supported the livelihoods of young entrepreneurs in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria, which had hit the island in 2017, thereby addressing potential drivers of migration.

176.   Speaking on behalf of the African Group, one representative noted with appreciation the almost USD 7 million that the Fund had provided to support 26 initiatives in 24 eligible African

countries in 2020. The Fund continued to play a significant role in the continent, especially during the COVID-19 crisis, so he thanked all Member States that had contributed. He also welcomed the incorporation of results-based management into the Fund's processes, as well as the increased flow of information to Member States through periodic newsletters and regular briefings.

177.   Another representative noted that the Fund was also a key resource for carrying out innovative initiatives in the Americas, which could later be built upon by governments or other donors. A third representative congratulated the Fund for achieving 100 per cent allocation of its funding by the end of 2020.

178.   The Standing Committee took note of document S/28/5.

IOM partnerships with private sector

179.   The Administration delivered a slide presentation illustrating the key achievements made and the lessons learned during the lifetime of the Private Sector Partnership Strategy 2016–2020, the first strategy of its kind at IOM.

180.   In terms of achievements, during the Strategy's five-year implementation period IOM had entered into more than 950 partnerships worldwide, cooperating with more than 90 businesses and foundations in 80 countries. The revenues generated as a result – over USD 24 million – were relatively modest, for the following reasons inter alia: a lack of the significant financial and human resources required for successful engagement with the private sector; the IOM "brand" was not well known; people were in some cases reluctant to associate themselves with migration issues because of the current toxic narrative on migration and migrants; only one national committee for IOM had been formed, USA for IOM.

181.   Of the revenues generated, the majority had come from businesses (67 per cent) and private foundations (21 per cent). USA for IOM had generated 4 per cent of that revenue, while individual contributions (legacies, direct contributions from individuals to projects/programmes and online contributions) accounted for less than 5.5 per cent.

182.   The thematic areas that had attracted the most support were labour migration, the protection of migrant workers and the prevention of labour exploitation; emergency response; assistance to vulnerable communities and individuals; migrant health; community development; and community stabilization within the framework of transition and recovery work. The two regions where funds had primarily been distributed to programmes and projects were Asia-Pacific and South America.

183.   A 2018 thematic evaluation conducted by the Office of the Inspector General of activities during the first phase (2016–2018) had confirmed the Strategy's relevance. It had also made recommendations for continued successful implementation, including that more resources be allocated for the Strategy's implementation; that other obstacles (mainly of a technical or administrative nature) be identified; that USA for IOM be leveraged; and that the role of the Donor Relations Division in the Strategy's implementation be addressed.

184.   The many activities conducted since 2016 that had been further intensified in 2018 could be grouped in three pillars underpinned by close and strong partnership between and among relevant stakeholders throughout the Organization: enhancing the capacity of IOM staff to engage with the private sector; increasing the number of partnerships with businesses, foundations and individuals; and enabling efficient implementation of the Strategy by making available effective operational support and oversight services.

185.   The Sustainable Development Goals and other international commitments clearly recognized that the private sector was an essential player in development and humanitarian action. It was therefore vital for IOM to continue to engage with the private sector in order to achieve those common goals. The Administration was grateful to Belgium and the Republic of Korea for their generous financial contributions for implementation of the Strategy, without which it would not have been possible to deliver the results attained. Other financial support had been obtained from OSI and through the Migration Resource Allocation Committee.

186.   Looking ahead, the next private sector partnerships strategy (2021–2023) had been developed and a draft version submitted for internal approval. The new strategy aimed to make IOM the preferred partner of the private sector in the areas of development and humanitarian assistance, which would require engagement in a wide range of resource mobilization and programme impact partnerships. Research had shown, for example, that the IOM Islamic Philanthropy Fund could act as an intermediary for the distribution of funds collected in the form of *zakat* and *sadaqah.* The Administration was currently developing standard operating procedures for that purpose, and IOM would consequently soon be one of five United Nations agencies to establish such a system, which would be able to draw on a pool of funds estimated at USD 500 to 600 billion overall.

187.   One delegate stressed the importance of engagement with the private sector to enlarge IOM's donor base and commended the Administration's efforts to date.

188.   The Standing Committee took note of the presentation on the Private Sector Partnership Strategy 2016–2020 and of the Member State comment made.

IOM global initiatives funding status

189.   The Administration delivered a slide presentation on the funding status of IOM global initiatives, starting with the voluntary unearmarked and softly earmarked contributions channelled through the Migration Resource Allocation Committee. The value of such contributions could not be overstated, as they allowed IOM to carry out strategic initiatives and key reforms that were aligned with its Strategic Vision. In 2020, about USD 31.3 million, or 1 per cent of total IOM income, had been made available to IOM through the Committee – an exponential increase in voluntary unearmarked contributions since 2017, when IOM had received USD 14.8 million. By the same token, the number of donors contributing unearmarked funding had jumped from 5 in 2017 to 13 in 2020. It was a source of particular satisfaction that a number of donors had signed multi-year agreements, as many current IOM reforms would be implemented over several years and some carried contractual obligations requiring predictable funding (the new enterprise resource planning system was a case in point). It was also encouraging that a new contributor – France – was already announced for 2021.

190.   A list of key initiatives funded through the Migration Resource Allocation Committee would be made available in the 2020 edition of the Annual Report on the Use of Unearmarked Contributions, which would be circulated to the full membership. Those initiatives included the establishment of the Migration Network Hub, which would support Member States and United Nations partners to implement evidence-based migration governance in pursuit of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; reinforcement of the global camp coordination and camp management cluster, focusing, in particular, on the IOM response to the COVID-19 pandemic; the establishment or bolstering of regional data hubs in the IOM Regional Offices in Bangkok, Cairo, Dakar, Nairobi, Pretoria and San José; the work of the Policy Hub; critical upgrades to the electronic Personal Health Record system used to monitor the health of migrants arriving in Europe; and strategic communication of a more balanced, fact-based coverage of migration in the media.

191.   The Migration Emergency Funding Mechanism, which had a target balance of USD 30 million, had provided support for crisis response in many countries between 2019 and 2021, but had been almost depleted: the current balance was USD 700,000. The Administration was grateful for the contribution made by the Philippines in 2020.

192.   The Global Assistance Fund, a funding mechanism enabling IOM to assist migrants when such assistance was not available through ongoing country-level programming, had assisted more than 3,600 vulnerable migrants in the previous 20 years, including – thanks to the 2020 contribution by Germany to the IOM COVID-19 appeal – 229 migrants in the last quarter of 2020. Unfortunately, the Fund had also been depleted by the start of 2021 and it was therefore currently unable to respond to any request for assistance by an IOM country office. Its replenishment would help IOM support migrants at risk of continued rights violations, victims of trafficking and migrants enduring mental and physical hardships.

193.   Lastly, the Rapid Response Transportation Fund, which was activated at the request of UNHCR for immediate transport assistance, had a target balance of USD 5 million but currently had only USD 848,000 on account; there had been no contributions to it since 2017.

194.   The Director General thanked the Member States that had provided unearmarked funding but observed that two of the funds – the Migration Emergency Funding Mechanism and the Rapid Response Transportation Fund – had never reached their target balances of USD 30 million and USD 5 million, respectively, despite having been established at the request of Member States. The conditions for drawing funds from the Mechanism were particularly restrictive: the funds had to be paid back within a reasonable time. In other words, the overriding consideration was not the nature of the emergency but rather the probability that the funds would be reimbursed once the emergency operation was more widely funded.

195.   In his view, that state of affairs called for a conversation on the logic of emergency funding and what the Member States expected of IOM in terms of emergency response. Of course, IOM could always launch an appeal when crisis struck; indeed, it had recently done so with other United Nations agencies in respect of the situation in Tigray, to little effect – the appeal remained very underfunded. It must be remembered that IOM did not always wait to act; the fact that it was a field-based organization meant that it responded immediately to rapidly escalating humanitarian crises. There was no crisis in which IOM had not fulfilled its responsibilities, and it had always benefited from funding from the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund in such crises, but it would be wrong to think that IOM had the tools it needed to act in a crisis when the extent to which it could rely on those tools was beyond its control.

196.   The Standing Committee took note of the presentation by the Administration and of the Director General's comments.

Closure of the session

197.   The Chairperson declared the Twenty-eighth Session of the Standing Committee on Programmes and Finance closed on Thursday, 1 July 2021, at 5.55 p.m.