

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROGRAMMES AND FINANCE

Thirty-second Session

STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR GENERAL

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Introduction

1. Excellencies, colleagues, friends, good morning. I am glad to have this opportunity to address you one final time. It has been an honour to lead IOM at such an auspicious moment in time, and a privilege to nurture the Organization to new levels of growth and maturity, a full partner and family member within the United Nations system.

2. This morning I will highlight some of our core achievements in 2022, as detailed in our Annual Report, and reflect on some of the most important changes for IOM – and the world at large – since 2018. I know that the Director General-elect, Amy Pope, will continue this good work, and that the Organization is in familiar hands.

3. The stability of this transition of Administration is particularly key given the global instability we see today.

4. In April of this year, clashes erupted across the Sudan. We estimate that close to 2 million individuals have been displaced internally, and over half a million have crossed into neighbouring countries. Many parts of the country remain inaccessible to humanitarian workers, exacerbating the domestic crisis, which is now threatening to spill across a region that is already under great strain.

5. As war in Ukraine grinds on, the human cost for civilians rises daily. The destruction of the Kakhovka dam has damaged infrastructure and has had and will continue to have disastrous environmental impacts. It has created further shortages of energy and water for a population already devastated by conflict. As IOM responds with water, food, emergency items and health care, we are reminded – once again – that those caught up in crisis situations are often those who have done the least to provoke them.

6. I wish I could say we have seen the resolution of crises since I took office in 2018. Unfortunately, I – like many of my fellow principals in United Nations agencies – have the sad duty to report continued strife across the world.

7. Within IOM, we have declared a Level 3 emergency for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which has seen 1 million people displaced since the beginning of the year. It is just the latest declaration. At the current time, we have seven Level 3 emergencies around the world, a record number. New crises erupt each year, but few disappear completely.

8. The same tragic continuity exists in the number of migrants who lose their lives each year, with horrifying predictability and scale. While numbers, nationalities and routes fluctuate, the parameters of tragedy persist.

9. Hundreds lost their lives in the Mediterranean just two weeks ago in what appears to have been an avoidable disaster. Hundreds more have found themselves in the hands of those who beat and torture them during their journey.

10. The plight of migrants along dangerous routes – particularly at sea – presents the global community with a wicked problem. But this should not lead to collective helplessness; it should instead be a call to arms to protect the rights – and lives – of people at their most vulnerable.

IOM in 2022

Resilience

11. In 2022, IOM's expenditure reached USD 2.9 billion, and the Organization had close to 19,000 staff working in some of the most complex operational settings in the world. IOM has been witness to deteriorating situations across the world, reflected by increased demand for assistance.

12. The war in Ukraine required IOM to draw on the full range of its capacity and experience in protecting individuals at a moment of deep, life-changing trauma. During the first weeks of the conflict, IOM supported the management of large-scale flows of people moving across borders at over 30 border crossing points. At the same time, the Organization monitored the situation of those displaced internally and offered wide-ranging support. By the end of 2022, we had reached over 3.25 million individuals affected by the crisis.

13. As the crisis has evolved, so has IOM's support, with the Organization offering advice and technical support to those receiving temporary protection across the European Union, while also tracking and responding to changing needs within Ukraine.

14. Our support for those affected will continue, even as fighting intensifies. But we must remain conscious that the focus on the war in Ukraine has reduced the visibility of crises around the world, including those induced or exacerbated by our changing climate. But they are no less urgent.

- (a) IOM's work on mobility dimensions of crisis reached over 31.1 million people – three times the population of my own country, Portugal.
- (b) Colleagues working on camp coordination and camp management supported 4.1 million people across 37 countries. Of those reached, 60 per cent resided in just five countries: Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Somalia and South Sudan.
- (c) IOM's health teams referred nearly 1 million people for treatment of moderate or severe malnutrition, and responded to 112 disease outbreaks in 85 countries, including multiple cholera outbreaks across Africa, the Middle East and Central America.
- (d) The cost of IOM's activities on humanitarian assistance and durable solutions exceeded USD 1 billion in 2022 alone.

15. As you know, IOM's mandate spans the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. By both responding to and providing support after crisis situations, we are committed to increasing the resilience of migrants, displaced persons and host communities, supporting individuals to determine their own futures.

16. This means framing our responses across borders, taking the needs of the whole region – and all affected populations – into account.

17. For example, through the IOM Comprehensive Action Plan for Afghanistan and Neighbouring Countries, colleagues provided support to more than 3.4 million Afghans and their host communities across Central Asia, principally in Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan.

18. However, our work in Afghanistan is now impeded by the prohibition against Afghan women working for the United Nations. Women and girls across the country are subject to totally unacceptable restrictions which violate their most basic human rights. While we will continue to deliver support, durable peace and stability is impossible without the active participation of women in the life and future of their country.

19. We have worked with governments across Central and South America to ensure a comprehensive response to the situation of millions of Venezuelan nationals in the region, as well as respond to increasing numbers of Venezuelans and other nationalities moving north through one of the most dangerous transit routes, the Darién Gap.

20. Increasingly, we have been required to look at both internal and international mixed movements of people as an interlocking chain of human mobility requiring a coherent, multifaceted response. We are learning from these experiences and looking ahead to how they might be applied to several new emerging challenges.

21. For this, data and analysis are essential. The establishment of our Global Data Institute in Berlin responds to this need.

22. IOM remains the host of the largest repository of primary data on internally displaced persons in the world. DTM data and analysis were used to inform 86 per cent of humanitarian response plans in 2022, while new tools, such as the Solutions and Mobility Index, offer the international community the opportunity to develop data tools and analysis in a disaggregated fashion on durable solutions for the future.

23. And, as the number and frequency of disasters rises, induced in great part by climate change, IOM has continued to innovate. Examples of this innovation include the creation of online scenario-based simulation exercises to support emergency preparedness design and programming, which has been used in Somalia; the development of early warning systems in West Africa, such as the transhumance tracking tool in Nigeria; and the piloting of new shelter models in the Philippines, complete with safe rooms for typhoon-prone areas.

24. Indeed, over 30 per cent of the Operational Part of IOM's Budget was allocated to climate change action and risk reduction considerations in 2022.

Mobility

25. Excellencies, the decision to move is never a simple one. Starting life in a new country requires courage and adaptability; it takes grit and determination. While migration can, and should, be a decision expectant with opportunity, too often the decision to move reflects the absence of opportunity at home.

26. Last year, as the effects of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic receded, IOM provided support and training to over tens of thousands of migrants at various points along their migration journeys, with the aim of promoting safe and regular migration and realizing its benefits.

27. IOM worked with migrant communities in 51 countries, offering guidance and support to promote social inclusion. For example, in Iraq, IOM undertook labour market assessments, and worked with the private sector to match migrants to employment opportunities.

28. IOM also worked with governments to ensure the safety of cross-border movements, supporting 336 points of entry around the world and establishing 46 disease surveillance systems. This remains critical work, even though the COVID-19 pandemic is behind us, and I would like to take this opportunity to caution Member States not to forget the challenges of viral transmission as quickly as we have forgotten the hardships of the lockdowns endured due to COVID-19.

29. IOM supported the resettlement, humanitarian admission and relocation activities of 30 States, assisting a total of 120,728 refugees and other vulnerable persons. The most significant operations were based in Lebanon, Pakistan and Türkiye.

30. We also assisted more than 50,000 individuals to return, mostly from the Niger (27%), Germany (14%) and Greece (5%), to Mali (9%), Guinea (9%) and Ethiopia (9%). IOM is increasingly called upon to support migrants in situations of vulnerability throughout the return process, highlighting the importance of a protection approach.

Governance

31. As a field-based, operational agency, IOM prioritizes the protection and well-being of those on the move, to the benefit of millions of people each year. But to make a difference to lives in the long-term, IOM's partnerships with Member States and other public actors are critical, to strengthen governance of migration and build capacity to support those who migrate.

32. This work is supported – to a great extent – through the USD 33.25 million in unearmarked funding allocated by just a handful of IOM's Member States, and the USD 16 million disbursed by the IOM Development Fund during 2022.

33. My thanks go to those Member States that contributed unearmarked funding in 2022; even with the budget reforms agreed last year, unearmarked contributions remain an essential source of support to enable IOM to strengthen its strategic and operational foundations.

34. Much of our unearmarked funding in 2022 was allocated to further implementation of the Internal Governance Framework, to support our responsibilities as coordinator of the United Nations Network on Migration and strengthen partnerships within the United Nations system, and to improve our operational effectiveness in the field.

35. But it has also supported new tools that are in demand, such as IOM's new Migration Management Digital Maturity Assessment, which helps Member States to identify gaps and next steps in order to digitally transform national immigration processes safely. We learned a lot during the COVID-19 pandemic. We need to pursue digitalization of migration processes.

36. Similarly, the IOM Development Fund enabled policy development in a range of areas, from labour migration to diaspora engagement. A quarter of these projects utilized technology of some kind, at a time when digital and technological advances are becoming integral to effective migration management, despite also being fraught with challenges.

37. While we continued to work closely with Member States on balanced and comprehensive policies, we remained focused on bringing together the full range of our stakeholders.

38. In June last year, IOM co-hosted the first Global Diaspora Summit, bringing governments together with diaspora communities, and raised a record-breaking USD 16.4 million in private sector revenue from corporations, foundations and individuals, as well as partnering with private sector actors to support migrants and displaced persons.

Enduring change

39. As I look towards the end of my term, I find myself reflecting on the changes that have taken place over the past five years.

40. Some of this change was unforeseen; in 2018, we had not anticipated spending months in lockdown, even years for some, sheltering from the COVID-19 virus. But the COVID-19 pandemic revealed the extent to which IOM excels in crisis. And amid that, and perhaps because of IOM's ability to adapt and respond to the unexpected, the Organization has continued to grow, in both reputation and activity.

41. I have watched IOM staff – under unprecedented pressure – rise to new challenges with a commitment, vocation and ingenuity to solve problems to which few Organizations can lay claim. And I have been left with a profound sense of pride and admiration for the men and women of this Organization that will endure long after my departure.

42. The role of any leader is to ready his or her organization for the future. And I believe that I – we – have laid the foundations for IOM to flourish over the coming decade, with structures in place that are necessary to manage what is now a multi-billion dollar per year operation.

43. The Strategic Vision 2019–2023 and the Internal Governance Framework have given IOM a sound basis for clear agenda-setting, both internally and externally, identifying pressing priorities for action. More than this, these processes have imbued IOM with strategic planning capability across Headquarters, the regional offices and country offices.

44. The mid-term review of the Strategic Vision, conducted last year through surveys and discussions with senior management, offered the leadership a snapshot of that progress. You will receive the highlights of this review in the annex to the text of this speech. The review highlighted:

- (a) First, that the Strategic Vision is, of course, not a perfect document. But I believe it has been a necessary step forward for IOM, as part of developing a strategic architecture.
- (b) Second, that priority-setting remains hard for a field-focused, triple-mandated Organization with a disproportionately project-based budget. But it is possible, and, I believe, welcome.
- (c) Third, that there is now greater coherence and exchange across programming areas. We have broken silos by guiding colleagues to focus on the broader goals of their work: building the resilience of individuals, communities, and societies; generating better – that is to say, safer – human mobility; and investing in sustainable governance, supported by data and strong partnerships.

45. This work is not finished; it will need time to consolidate. But it has given a horizon to an organization that has – too often – been forced to focus on the short term by projectization.

46. Similarly, the Internal Governance Framework has shored up the operational heart of IOM, transforming its back-room machinery. I wish to express my thanks to Laura Thompson, the former Deputy Director General, for her extraordinary work to develop and implement the Framework, born from the experience of her many years at IOM.

47. As of June 2023, 89 per cent of the work items across workstreams 1, 2, and 4 of the Internal Governance Framework had been completed or fast-tracked for completion, and we are on track to deliver a fit-for-purpose internal governance system.

48. At the same time as we have built from the inside out, we have also sought to fully integrate ourselves into the – sometimes bewildering – family of the United Nations. The responsibility bestowed upon IOM in 2018 to coordinate the United Nations Network on Migration was a statement of trust in one of the newest related agencies in the United Nations system.

49. If this was ever viewed as a gamble, it has paid off. Last year, 153 Member States attended the first International Migration Review Forum in New York. The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the United Nations Network on Migration are closely linked. IOM, through the United Nations Network on Migration, was at the heart of discussions, supporting Member States to review their progress in realizing the objectives of the Global Compact. Moreover, at the end of 2022, the Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund had received USD 37.5 million in capital from more than 19 donors, including non-traditional donors, while expertise has been collated through the Migration Network Hub.

50. But, most importantly, for the first time in its history, the United Nations has a common voice on migration, reflecting the priorities of its membership.

51. We have been on a long – and sometimes laborious – journey to fully participate in the United Nations, but our influence is undeniable. The vast majority of United Nations common country analyses finalized in 2022 included key migration trends, identifying migrants and displaced populations as groups that should not be left behind.

52. IOM's membership of the Steering Group on Solutions to Internal Displacement, established to advance the Secretary General's Action Agenda, reflects the leadership IOM has demonstrated in the field. And IOM's role as first responder and advocate on behalf of those countries and communities most impacted by climate change has been acknowledged on the global and regional stages, and hopefully IOM made a significant contribution to the breakthrough at the Twenty-seventh Conferences of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in which the relevance of climate change for human mobility was recognized. The world has started to recognize the plight of those displaced, just as they are recognizing the value of migration as a form of adaptation.

53. The SDG Summit in September will be my last major engagement as Director General of IOM. I believe it will be an excellent opportunity to underscore the importance of human mobility for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, and to emphasize that migration can be a cornerstone of sustainable development, prosperity, and progress, if well managed.

54. But the SDG Summit is also a reminder that our work is far from finished, and that we cannot be complacent at a time when achievement of so many of our goals is slipping from our grasp. More specifically, when so many people around the world are in desperate need, it is a reminder that the United Nations system, and our work, remains desperately needed.

Concluding remarks

55. Excellencies, colleagues. It has been an honour to lead IOM at such a pivotal moment in its development and to lead a staff whose commitment is matched only by their empathy.

56. I leave, as I imagine did many of my predecessors, with a heavy sense of work unfinished. This is the burden of all leaders. The ever-present feeling that more could have been done.

57. But I also leave with a heavy heart as I look at the world today: the growing divisions between world powers, and their ideologies and intentions; the growing dichotomy between world economies, and within them; and the growing divide between migrants and refugees and the communities that host them, full of hate and xenophobia.

58. These trends are interlinked. It will not be enough to tackle the world's problems one by one. Of course, we need to fight the impacts of climate change; but we must also find new legal pathways

to allow migrants to transform their lives, and it will be essential to keep responding to humanitarian emergencies, whether born of disaster or conflict.

59. But we must also challenge the underlying instincts that have led to the crises we see around us, namely increasing national parochialism, self-interest and lack of respect for human rights. I believe that the adoption of the Global Compact was a moment when many leaders set aside those concerns and came together in solidarity with migrants. It will be a necessary anchor for years to come.

60. Migrants, ironically, embody the characteristics of openness, courage and cooperation that we would hope to see in our leaders, and which will be needed to overcome the many challenges ahead. I hope we will learn from them. Thank you.

Annex

Mid-term Review of the Strategic Vision: key findings

I. Background

Between January and September 2022, the Executive Office¹ undertook a review of the Strategic Vision 2019–2023 in order to:

- **Assess progress to realize core pillars and drivers of success:** what has been achieved, what more needs to be done?
- **Assess how well the core ideas of the Vision have held up:** what issues do we need to consider more, or less, in the future?
- **Inform next cycle of strategic planning:** how to build on the institutional developments of the past three years?

II. Main findings

The Strategic Vision was a necessary step forward for IOM, as part of developing a strategic architecture.

The Strategic Vision was not considered to be a perfect document and is not a traditional United Nations document. However, staff recognized the value of the Vision in strengthening coherence and establishing a common point of reference (internally and externally) for an organization with a broad mandate and decentralized programming. The Vision focused attention on areas in need of institutional strengthening (e.g. it was a catalyst for the development of the Internal Governance Framework). Some areas of work were considered to be underplayed, notably humanitarian action and protection.

The priority-setting approach of the Strategic Vision has proved challenging to an Organization that is disproportionately project-based.

Many staff struggled to identify and set priorities, but there has been a discernible shift from “we cannot” to “it’s hard but possible”. This has been bolstered by the positive experience of leading discussions within the United Nations Network on Migration, and a growing capability to shape issues for and with Member States to shift programming closer to identified needs and priorities. IOM has also become more prominent on key issues, such as climate change and data on internal displacement.

For the first time, the Strategic Vision has offered a set of common principles to guide development of regional, national and thematic strategic planning.

The Strategic Vision has been a catalyst for the development of a strategic architecture for IOM for the first time. Regional strategies were brought under a single planning cycle, alongside a series of key thematic strategies on topics such data, climate change, legal identity, and migration and sustainable development. Guidance to assist missions to develop country-level strategies has been established, and a workplan cycle has been rolled out gradually for Headquarters Departments and the regional offices. This has all been underpinned by the Strategic Results Framework.

¹ The review was led by the DG’s Special Advisor for Policy and Strategy, and a penholder was seconded from the Department of Policy and Research. The Executive Office engaged an independent consultant to analyse inputs, including a senior management survey (60% response rate), and to conduct focus group and key informant interviews (60 staff).

The three pillars of the Vision articulate a vision for IOM beyond traditional silos and allow the Organization to strategically frame priorities across programmatic areas, while retaining flexibility.

The pillars have helped break rigid adherence to programming areas. However, they have been understood to different extents. Governance is well understood, while mobility is understood less well by staff (should it indicate increased, or better quality, movement of people?), and resilience is a more fluid concept that has been harder to grasp, although it is closely linked to IOM's triple mandate.

IOM has grown exponentially and has the potential to do more, particularly on workforce development.

Some of the drivers for success outlined in the Strategic Vision are on course to be "completed" (such as the Internal Governance Framework), while others are long-term endeavours (such as policy capacity and staff empowerment). Some, such as innovation, require further unpacking to understand what they mean for the Organization. There was a strong call to strengthen the link between the drivers of success and investment of softly and unearmarked funding and to increase transparency regarding allocation decisions.

IOM has demonstrated resilience at a time of great uncertainty. The Strategic Vision has helped IOM remain focused on internal reforms while navigating global shifts.

IOM has delivered strong responses to unanticipated events, including complex crises such as those in Afghanistan and Ukraine, and unanticipated global events, such as the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. Despite these significant efforts, IOM has made strong progress on institutional issues, such as United Nations integration (e.g. through the United Nations Network on Migration and membership of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group Core Group).

III. Looking forward

IOM has changed a lot over the past decade.

While the Strategic Vision acknowledged that fast-paced change had already been seen in terms of IOM's staffing, budget and responsibilities, significant increases in these areas have continued since 2018. By the end of 2023, the Organization expects its expenditure to reach more than USD 3 billion, and staffing numbers are expected to hit 20,000. As expected, the establishment of United Nations Network on Migration, and IOM's coordination thereof, have raised expectations of IOM's leadership on migration matters within the United Nations system. In turn, IOM has become more intentional about the issues it seeks to raise on the global stage. Internal reforms, including the design and implementation of the Internal Governance Framework, preparations for budget reform, changes to IOM's leadership structure and Headquarters restructuring all point to the need for critical consolidation.

The world is changing fast.

The review identified a number of underlying challenges facing IOM as it seeks to fulfil its mandate:

- Demographic change, with deeply divergent prospects around the world.
- Persistent inequality, which is widening since the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Climate change, which is already strongly impacting vulnerable communities.
- Conflict and instability, with more protracted situations and greater impact on civilians.

These long-standing concerns are now complicated by a number of emerging challenges:

- Complex vulnerability brought on by a vicious cycle of political, economic and climate impacts.
- Technological change, including digitalization and the role of artificial intelligence.
- Changing work and mobility patterns, as national and sectoral workforce shortages are complicated by the impacts of workplace automation, remote/hybrid work practices, and a continuation of precarious contracts and unauthorized working.
- Further entrenchment of unequal access to travel and visas, across and within countries.
- Fast-changing internal migration dynamics, combined with stresses on urban locations.

The institutional landscape is becoming more complex.

While there is increased focus on durable solutions and the potential of applying a humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach, there is also increased awareness that the more fluid concepts of who is mobile and who is in need are complicating protection responses. Nonetheless, leveraging data and strategic partnerships remain key to strong outcomes.

As migration is a cross-cutting issue across so many areas of action, a central challenge for IOM is how to ensure partnerships based on strong collaboration and mutual comparative advantage, both within the United Nation system and with regional/national entities. Regional economic communities, multilateral development banks and regional consultative processes are all considered to be key stakeholders for the future, as are private sector, local and civil society partners. The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the United Nations Network on Migration are viewed as key strategic entry points for partnership.