

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROGRAMMES AND FINANCE

Thirty-third Session

STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR GENERAL

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1. Excellencies, distinguished representatives, friends and colleagues, a very good morning to all of you. I am honoured to welcome you to the second session of the Standing Committee on Programmes and Finance of 2023, and my first session as the Director General of IOM.
2. Let me first start by thanking you, Ambassador Gberie from Sierra Leone, for chairing this meeting and for your extremely able leadership over this last year as the Chairperson of the Council Bureau. Under your guidance, today, the Standing Committee will build a solid foundation for the 114th Session of the Council, and for IOM and the work we will do over the course of the next year.
3. Now, the most important work that we are going to do today is to review our 2024 budget, and I know that this task may not sound terribly exciting, but what we do know is that the budget enables us to do the work that you, as our Member States, so value. It enables us to serve the people who are most in need around the world. Recent events have reminded us just how much need there is around the world, how much need there is for bodies like the International Organization for Migration. Yes, still imperfect, but necessary, this international machinery that is meant to promote the economic and social advancement of all people.
4. Excellencies, despite our best intentions, the number one driver of IOM's remarkable growth over the last several years has been crisis and emergency response.
5. We know today that we are meeting against a backdrop where the world remains in crisis, for example the situation in Gaza, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and Israel. Excellencies, you know, as well as I do, that on the seventh day of my tenure as Director General, in Israel, Hamas attacked, killed and took civilians from around the world hostage.
6. But, since then, we have seen the conflict intensify. Thousands of civilians have been killed, thousands have been unable to reach safety, thousands more are injured or missing. And the numbers are growing every day. As I speak to you, more than 70 of our United Nations brothers and sisters have been killed. And we mourn them, we mourn all loss of life.
7. Ladies and gentlemen, Excellencies, I do this work – we at IOM do this work – because we truly believe in the dignity and worth of all people. We truly believe that all human life is precious, regardless of nationality, regardless of religion, regardless of background. We believe in the aspirations that were set forth in the Charter of the United Nations, we believe in the importance of respecting international law, and we believe in this system – no matter how imperfect it is – that we have all become members of, that we have all signed up to, which ultimately means that we promote the social and economic advancement of all people and that we enable conditions for all human beings to flourish. And across the world, sadly, we are failing to meet these aspirations. We know that in the situation playing out right now in the Middle East, there are no winners. And we know the biggest losers are the most vulnerable. So, to anyone who is impacted by the suffering that is going on, I extend my deepest condolences.
8. We fully endorse the Secretary-General's call for a ceasefire so that we can do what we do best – respond to displaced communities in need. And we echo his call for the release of hostages.
9. Our IOM team on the ground stands ready to support the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) and the United Nations community, whether by providing life-saving support to displaced communities on the ground or helping third-country nationals get home. But

without unimpeded aid and access for humanitarian workers we remain on standby, unable to do the work that we are called to do.

10. Yet even as the world watches with horror at the situation in the region, we are responding to multiple crises across the globe where civilians are caught in the crossfire, where the lives of millions of people have been ended abruptly, where the futures of millions of people have been disrupted and their dreams dashed. And unfortunately, many of these crises do not attract the cameras, the political engagement or the funding that is needed to meet the extraordinary needs across the world.

11. In fact, just this last month, we were responding to five Level 3 emergencies. That means that we are pulling out all the stops. All of IOM is working to respond to five crises.

12. We are in the Sudan, where 8.1 million people have been displaced within and outside the country, including 4 million just since April. The situation in the Sudan is now the number one displacement crisis in the world. That is a ranking that no one wants to have.

13. We are working in Ukraine, where more than 5.1 million people have been displaced and 6.7 million have fled across Europe. In fact, IOM's presence in Ukraine is the biggest United Nations presence in the country.

14. We are working in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where 6.1 million people are displaced, including 600,000 by the unfolding M23 crisis.

15. And in Haiti, and in Afghanistan, millions of people have been displaced, millions of people have been robbed of their safety, their security and their future.

16. And there's more than just the Level 3 emergencies. The ongoing drought in the Horn of Africa has displaced 3.5 million people in Somalia to date. Earlier this year, we responded to the earthquake in Türkiye, the floods in Libya, and the unprecedented number of people across Latin America who are on the move today.

17. On Friday afternoon, I am flying to the Pacific Islands Forum in the Cook Islands, to see first-hand how climate change is rewriting human mobility patterns, often with debilitating consequences.

18. The bottom line is that when disaster strikes, when people are on the move, when they have no-one else to turn to, when they have no home to go back to, IOM will be there, to save lives and to protect people.

19. We know from you, our Member States, that responding quickly in a crisis is what you value most. It will always be our top priority and we will always continue to deliver and improve on our delivery.

20. So, I want to say thank you. I want to say thank you for enabling us to do this work, whether through the budget reform process that allows us to put more capacity into field operations, whether it is through your unearmarked or softly earmarked funding, or your projectized funding. With your support, I am proud to say we are able to move additional resources into the Migration Emergency Funding Mechanism, so that we can get out to the field faster.

21. We're building global stocks through supply chain hubs in Asia, the Americas, the Middle East and Africa so that we can get resources to vulnerable communities as soon as the need strikes.

22. All of this is to improve at the delivery of what we know that you expect us to deliver. And we know that responding to these disasters is hugely expensive, in terms of money spent, and also in terms of lives lost. So, while we deeply appreciate the generosity of so many of you in supporting these efforts, we know that the system cannot continue to bear the extraordinary costs of an ever-increasing number of disasters.

23. So, for that reason, rather than just being reactive, we know that being proactive is an essential part of doing our work.

24. In today's world, the primary drivers of migration are conflict, poverty and climate change. And the data tell us that the impact of climate change will soon be the number one driver of displacement. Two reasons why:

- (a) More than half of internal displacements today are driven by climate-induced disasters. In fact, climate accounts for more displacement than conflict in the Eastern Horn of Africa, where I visited about 10 days ago.
- (b) Seventy per cent of the countries that will be most impacted by climate change are also among the world's most fragile countries.

25. So we simply have to do more to anticipate and respond to climate-driven migration. That is why our 2024 budget puts more money into data analysis, so that we can do the planning, forward-thinking and forecasting, to deal with the challenges before millions of people are displaced.

26. You might remember that thinking about how to respond to climate mobility was a key part of our recent October session of the International Dialogue on Migration, and I thank those of you who attended, those of you who danced, those of you who offered statements, those of you who came to provide support. We had representatives from governments, from the United Nations system, from civil society, from the private sector, artists. We had people from around the world all discussing potential solutions. And, as part of our conversation over the next two days we are going to demonstrate how we can use our data more effectively to anticipate communities who are most at risk. And at our Council session at the end of November we will have a more in-depth discussion at a high level so that our Member States can deliver on the global promise of climate mobility.

27. Innovative solutions are going to come from everywhere, but it is true that right now, at IOM, only a small percentage of our programming is on building resilience to climate change. With your support, that will not be the case for much longer. We are going to allocate more of our resources to improve our capacity to anticipate and help communities to adapt. We hope to create better outcomes for more people as a result.

28. But, you and I know, as front-line witnesses to all of the challenges in the world, to all of the hardships, we might be tempted to lose hope. But the evidence tells us that migration is actually an opportunity – it is an opportunity for countries and it is an opportunity for individuals. Migration throughout human history has been driving development. And the evidence shows that the long-term, most durable solutions are ones that enable the creation of regular pathways for migration. Regular pathways actually enable migration to become part of long-term economic sustainable development rather than just a problem that countries have to solve.

29. In fact, USD 831 billion in remittances were sent in 2022 by migrants and diaspora communities, creating a social safety net and jobs in countries of origin when the world faced the lingering impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. We know that migration is boosting skills in destination countries that now are experiencing labour shortages, and we see that regular migration pathways increase public confidence in migration systems and actually enable us to better protect migrants.

30. And the reason why I am so focused on building out more regular pathways, the reason why this work is so critical at this moment in time, is because of four global trends that we're seeing.

- (a) Thirty of the largest economies have experienced labour shortages; these labour shortages cost USD 1.3 trillion per year, that's trend number one.
- (b) Trend number two is that the labour shortages are going to get bigger as populations age across the global North. In fact, by 2050, people over the age of 65 will account for 40 per cent of the population in Japan and the Republic of Korea. And Italy, Spain, Greece and Portugal are not far behind.
- (c) Trend number three: The world has 1.8 billion young people between the ages of 10 to 24. Ninety per cent of them live in developing countries. So, Excellencies, this is not a question of not having enough young people in the world, it is a question of where the young people will find their opportunities. In fact, 70 per cent of Africa's population is under the age of 30, and 40 per cent are under the age of 14.
- (d) Trend number four: In the countries with increasing numbers of young people, there simply are not enough jobs. So, 6 out of the 10 countries with the highest youth unemployment rate are also in Africa. But the good news is that the solution is inherent in the trends I have just outlined.

31. The good news is that with common sense, strategic migration policies, the tools that we all now have at our disposal and the tools that we are going to build, we can build a future that leaves no-one behind. We can build a future that is good for the migrant herself, good for the community she comes from, and very good for the community that she goes to.

32. And ultimately, we know that when governments create policies that enable regular pathways, which we, at IOM, are well positioned to facilitate, we can build outcomes that will reduce burdens on the asylum system and will safeguard refugee protections for those who will qualify for protection under the 1951 Convention. That's why it's so important that we work closely with our partners at the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to build out a range of solutions for people in need.

33. We also know that we can build outcomes that tackle the smuggling and trafficking businesses that are now profiting from irregular migration, because we will reduce the need for intermediaries. We also know that this will increase public confidence in well-managed migration. And finally, and most importantly, it will contribute to the development of all people, the migrant herself, the community she comes from and the community she goes to.

34. So we are looking forward to having a conversation as part of this Standing Committee meeting on how we can adapt skills-based labour migration programmes for people who have protection needs – people who will not necessarily qualify for refugee or asylee protections, but who are still extremely vulnerable and have very few options at home.

35. As the World Bank demonstrated in the *World Development Report 2023: Migrants, Refugees, and Societies*, everyone benefits when we can align migrant skills and attributes with the needs of destination countries. And, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, it just makes sense.

36. But, as you can hear, we have a very ambitious agenda. As you know, we are called to do more than ever to address the factors that are displacing communities, to come up with solutions that leave no-one behind. We know that if we are going to achieve this objective, then we have to continue to mature as an institution. Now, growth is not easy, we all know that. Change is not easy, but evolution is necessary. IOM is no longer a small shop on the corner somewhere in town. We are a key part of the

skyline now, and what we do is at the centre of so many policies that we know are critically important to each one of your governments.

37. We are expected to spend over USD 3 billion this year. The number of IOM staff is projected to reach over 20,000 by the end of the year, and when you include contractors, that number is over 30,000 people.

38. You all recognize, as part of budget reform, the need for IOM to be ready to meet the growing demands that we are facing, and it shows us that you are also demanding a strong, transparent, and accountable Organization. And we have heard you. The budget I submitted is just the beginning.

39. As many of you know, we have retained the UN Advisory Alliance and asked for an independent analysis of our organizational structure, so that we can maximize efficiencies in programming while also optimizing the use of our resources. This builds on a number of assessments that have been done over the last year, whether by the Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) or by various Member States. It also builds on the feedback we are getting from our staff, through our global staff survey and through our other engagements, both during the transition period and at our recent Global Chiefs of Mission Meeting.

40. I have briefed the Member States, through each of the regional groups, on what we are doing as part of the organizational review, and I intend to continue those conversations as this review progresses. We hope that the review of the Headquarters structure will be completed and implemented in the first quarter of 2024. We know that the review of the field structure is going to take a little bit longer, so we expect that to be completed within the second quarter of 2024.

41. But we know that we have to do it. We know that it is critical, because over the last several years our budgetary and strategic processes have developed in an ad hoc way. I don't know if any of you have kids who play with Lego. I equate it to a Lego building, where people just stack on piece upon piece upon piece, and at the end the Lego building does not stand very solidly. Unfortunately, that is a bit like IOM, we have been a bit of the Lego house, and we recognize that at this point in time, as an organization with over USD 3 billion in operations across the world, as an organization who is called to deal with some of the most challenging issues of our time, and to do so in a way that enables the most sustainable development, it is time that we develop as an organization to meet those needs.

42. So our 2024 budget allocation will have some new resources for the key components that we know we need to improve to do our business well, whether it is finance, legal, human resources or making our regional offices fit for purpose. And we are making some progress, but we know we are not yet where we need to be.

43. So let me call out our Member States who have supported this work and who are pushing us to do more. And let me say thank you to those Member States who have offered unearmarked funding to do the work that is not always so glamorous, but we know is essential to have an organization that is fit for purpose. And I am going to just take a moment to call out those countries who have offered unearmarked funding for this purpose, to say thank you to Belgium, Denmark, France, Ireland, Norway, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Qatar, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States. We say thank you, because your investment in providing this sort of unearmarked funding, this flexible funding, allows us to do the things that are so desperately needed so that we can deliver to the world's most vulnerable people.

44. We also are going to spend a couple of days giving you a little bit more detail on how we are responding to organizational needs, so you will hear updates from the Office of the Inspector General and the IOM Audit and Oversight Advisory Committee, you will hear about our plans for the IOM

Headquarters building, and we will have a discussion on implementation of the External Auditor's recommendations.

45. One housekeeping note: the tenure of the Auditor General of Ghana, who has been our External Auditor for the Organization, is going to end with the closure of 2024 accounts, so we are going to launch a process in January to appoint a replacement. That will take place in the Council session next year. This is a really important institutional role – again it falls under the category of not terribly glamorous, it is also pro bono, although we do pay the costs of travel – but it is a critical role because this is how you, as our Member States, provide independent assurance that we are using your resources in the way that you expect us to use them. So please, I invite interested Member States to respond to the call for candidates when it is launched.

46. Ultimately, the budget is just a tool, the structural assessment is just a tool. These are tools that we hope will enable the work that is needed to drive a vision, to drive a strategic plan that will guide us over the next five years. And that plan starts with a vision, which is to serve migrants, to serve our Member States, to serve our workforce with a people-centred, data-driven approach that delivers on the promise of migration while protecting the world's most vulnerable.

47. But here is what is critical: it starts with service. And that is how we see our job at IOM. We are here to serve, whether it is serving migrants, whether it is serving all of you in the room, or whether it is serving one another as we work across the world.

48. Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, friends and colleagues, at this moment in time, in world history, migration is an important part of the policy discussions for all of our Member States. That means IOM must be ready to fit the pieces of the migration puzzle together. To use our knowledge, to use our skills, to use our capacities in ways that are often creative, that are often innovative, that are never bureaucratic, to serve each of you, to serve the most vulnerable people around the world.

49. And we believe that creating regular pathways will help deliver on migration's promise. We believe that anticipating displacement factors will enable us to deliver on this promise and we believe that being ready to save lives around the world enables the delivery on migration's promise. And we hope that working in partnership with all of you, in working in service to all of you, that we can create a better ecosystem that will enable better outcomes for more people round the world.

50. So, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, thank you. Thank you for your dedication, thank you for your devotion to IOM, thank you for your support, thank you for everything you do to help us achieve the work that we do to serve people around the world. And thank you for the work that all of you do to make this world a better place. I appreciate you.