

US Statement at the 105th IOM Council
Delivered by Margaret Pollack

Thank you Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, and Distinguished Colleagues:

To begin, I would like express my thanks to Ambassador Chavez Basagoita of Peru for his work as chair of the Council over the course of the last year and to extend my congratulations to you, Ambassador Eddico, and the Council Bureau on your election. I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome the Independent State of Samoa to the organization and to offer my own congratulations to IOM Deputy Director General Laura Thompson for her re-election in June.

In 1951, the international community showed incredible prescience founding IOM, the sole international organization with an exclusive migration mandate, and IOM has proven time and again the value of having such an organization in the international community. This is an exciting time for the organization. International attention on migration issues continues to increase; its growing membership brings new perspectives to the organization; and the approval last year of IOM's budget strengthening model positions us to make lasting improvements in the organization. But it remains imperative that IOM – and its member states – prioritize wisely as we set the agenda for the organization.

First, we must focus on strengthening management and oversight functions. There is clear consensus on this point among member states and the IOM administration. Recent efforts to develop staff capacity and responsiveness and to develop systems to provide transparent and accountable management of projects and the

organization are a good start. This will not be a quick fix and requires patience, a strong vision, and clear benchmarks to ensure we are on the right path.

Second, we must strengthen those areas where member states rely on IOM most – in humanitarian emergencies and in providing practical expertise and solutions for migration management. The Migration Emergency Response Fund has provided vital assistance in the regional response to the CAR crisis, in the Syria regional response, and in other emergencies, but this fund is not yet fully capitalized. IOM’s Department of Operations and Emergencies’ multi-year humanitarian capacity and institutional strengthening project, partially funded by Sweden, Switzerland, and the United States, has allowed IOM to deploy a rapid response team within 24 hours when Typhoon Haiyan hit the Philippines and to respond to recent conflicts in northern Iraq, but additional financial support is needed for this project as well. IOM has proven to be a flexible, responsive partner in emergencies – most recently adapting its camp coordination and camp management skills to help respond to the Ebola crisis – but IOM’s structures have felt the strain of four concurrent L3 emergencies, and we should better support the organization’s emergency efforts. IOM has also proven itself to be a particularly strong resource for member states in providing expertise and solutions for migration management – and we commend efforts to strengthen this core activity.

Third, we have to be sure that the goals member states and IOM set are deliberate and achievable. IOM is a dynamic organization, but must be thoughtful as it takes on new initiatives. Member states must do the same. For example, we should consider if member state leadership would be more effective if the working group focused on the IOM-UN relationship exclusively.

Mr. Chairman,

Last year IOM played a vital role preparing member states for an informed and concrete discussion during the 2013 UN High Level Dialogue on Migration and Development. IOM has since taken the lead looking for practical ways to support the eight-point agenda developed at the High Level Dialogue, including by playing a key role as the secretariat for the Migrants in Countries in Crisis initiative. This initiative aims to better prepare us all to know what to do during crises – either armed conflict or natural disasters – to protect migrants. The United States is pleased to be working with the governments of the Philippines, Australia, Bangladesh, Costa Rica, Ethiopia, and the European Commission on this initiative, and we appreciate the added value IOM brings, contributing its broad expertise on migration crisis issues as part of this governmental Working Group. Over the course of the next 18 months or so, we will undertake a global consultation process and we look forward to all stakeholders, including governments, international organizations, civil society, and the private sector, engaging to bring their good ideas and best practices to the table.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, the United States has been a strong supporter of IOM. We continue to value IOM as a strategic partner in advancing our goals of legal, orderly, and safe migration and commend its leadership in responding to migration challenges during humanitarian crises. As member states, we must work with IOM to continue to strengthen the organization with a focus on key strategic areas. We look forward to working with our colleagues in the room in the spirit of

consensus to ensure that the organization has the necessary capacity and expertise to perform its important role in the international community.