



International Organization for Migration (IOM)
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Statement by
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Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour for me to speak to you all today at this momentous occasion.

As we join one another in adopting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we are committing to a highly ambitious, universal agenda that will guide our efforts to achieve sustainable development over the next 15 years.

It is an agenda that includes many significant and critical issues that were left wanting by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

For example, the 2030 Agenda highlights the positive contribution of migrants for inclusive growth and sustainable development. It recognises the need to enhance migrants' development outcomes, and to ensure that they are not left behind.

This is a great achievement, and something IOM strongly applauds.

By including migration in the new agenda, we challenge ourselves to address the causes and consequences of migration in a way that promotes dignified, orderly, and safe migration for the benefit of all. I urge all governments and stakeholders to take these commitments seriously, and offer three points on why it is critical to do so:

I. Dimension

First, as I've said many times before, we are in a period of the greatest human mobility in history. One in every seven people on the planet today – roughly one billion people – are migrants.

Many billions more are directly affected by migration – whether migrants' family members or the people who receive indispensable services and other support from migrants.

The dimensions of today's migration mean it is inevitable and will only continue over the lifetime of the 2030 Agenda. For example, demographic shifts and labour market transformation in both developing and developed countries will lead to an increased need to match people with jobs at all skill levels.

We must therefore manage and plan for large scale migration, recognizing that it can be a boon for development – if well managed.

II. Displacement

Second, we are witnessing an unprecedented number of humanitarian crises in the world, including in Syria, Iraq, Libya, the Central African Republic and

South Sudan. Ebola impacting the economies of West Africa; climate change and extreme weather events are all factors driving migration that must be addressed.

With 33.3 million people internally displaced and 16.7 million refugees, the number of people displaced by violence and conflict today in the world is the highest since World War II.

At the same time, IOM data show that the number of migrants dying on dangerous journeys in the hope of finding better lives for themselves and their families, is rising.

All States have the international obligation to save the lives of those seeking help. We must address these drivers of displacement and act in concerted and coherent partnership in doing so.

III. Discourse

Third, the international community must work together to change the migration discourse to something more positive.

We have watched with dismay the growing tide of anti-migrant sentiment in many parts of the world, as hearts harden towards migrants, and communities begin to turn on each other.

Rather than succumb to these negative perceptions, we must instead focus on what migrants contribute to their host countries, as well as their countries of origin.

For IOM, the commitments outlined in the 2030 agenda are critical means through which to address these challenges. Implementing the migration aspects of the agenda would call for the adoption of a “high road scenario” on migration.

This could encompass many different policy interventions, but is focused on best practice measures to improve migrant and host population wellbeing through safe, orderly, dignified and humane migration.

IOM stands ready to assist governments to develop and implement such policies in the pursuit of the 2030 Agenda and a world free of poverty. We are developing a Migration Governance Index to help monitor and build capacity in planning and implementation of governments’ migration policies, and IOM has a unique capacity to gather migration policy data from its Member States which could facilitate monitoring of the new agenda.

Together, we can make a difference. We are here to help.