

IOM Council - 114th Session

27 - 29 November 2023

General Debate

Statement by Portugal

Thank you Chair, Director General.

Portugal aligns with the EU statement.

Today, we face increasingly complex and multiplying challenges. Conflict, adverse socio-economic conditions, political instability and climate change, all impact human mobility; and all lead to increased numbers of people on the move.

The war of Russia against Ukraine caused a massive number of forcibly displaced people, within the country and beyond. Portugal is proud of sheltering close to 60.000 people, most of them women and children, who had to flee Ukraine.

Following the horrific terrorist attacks of Hamas on Israel which we condemn in the strongest terms, the destruction of infrastructure in Gaza and the resulting unprecedented humanitarian crisis led to the forced displacement of over 1.6 million people, in less than 2 months. We hope the current truce can ultimately lead to a cease-fire; the liberation of all the hostages; and open the prospect for a political solution to the conflict, which is the only way to long-term peace.

But conflicts in Afghanistan, Sudan, South Sudan and Syria still rage and have forced millions into displacement.

Meanwhile, climate change is creating or worsening conflicts and forcing people to move, especially in countries of the Global South and SIDs.

Lives and livelihoods, particularly the poorest and most vulnerable, which are disproportionately women, are threatened by more frequent and extreme weather events.

All this makes the nexus between human mobility and environmental challenges, and other structural factors that compel people to leave their places of origin, more important than ever.

As a Champion Country, Portugal is engaged and committed to the GCM.

The Portuguese Strategic Cooperation Program reflects our engagement.

Some examples:

- We are strengthening the resilience of communities to natural disasters through prevention, risk management and disaster response, in line with the Sendai Framework.
- With the SOFF initiative, we support WMO's work in Guinea-Bissau for early warning in the Atlantic region.

- We are installing SMART Submarine Cables along the north-east Atlantic, to provide early warning of seismic and tsunami events and to monitor climate change and its effect on sea level.
- We signed a landmark debt swap agreement with Cabo Verde for investments in environmental and climate initiatives.

Chair,

Safe, orderly and regular migration ought to be a central feature in our countries. This is why establishing legal pathways anchored in human rights is so important.

This requires comprehensive, coordinated and concerted global solutions. And it implies a whole-of-society and whole-of-route approach, with the participation of migrants, forcibly displaced people and refugees.

Portugal has negotiated labour mobility agreements and social security agreements with countries in Europe, Africa and Asia. And we promote positive narratives on migration.

Nevertheless, discrimination and bias are still a concern. So legal reforms were approved, reflected in our GCM national implementation plan.

We hope that the COP28 and the Global Refugee Forum will strengthen our determination to find, together, integrated solutions.

I thank you.