

Thank you Chair, Director General.

A very warm welcome to the DG and thank you for the nice hat which turned out to be incredibly practical on a cold morning run. And let me start by welcoming the appointment of the great Sir Mo Farah as IOM's first Goodwill Ambassador. What better choice. He is a man of extraordinary talent, and one who has inspired our nation, and he will be a fantastic ambassador and an authentic voice for this organisation and a symbol for what migrants can achieve.

It's now almost two months since Hamas' horrific terrorist attack on Israel, let me start by thanking IOM and its staff on behalf of the UK for their continued dedication and vital work in the humanitarian response in Gaza. And let me convey our nation's deepest condolences and pay tribute to the 108 UN staff who have lost their lives in this conflict.

We also welcome, like so many others, the recent pause in hostilities and are pleased a further extension has been agreed and hope it'll be extended further. This represents a vital first step in getting all the hostages out and getting humanitarian aid into Gaza. But much, much more humanitarian aid, including fuel is needed, and we hope these efforts can continue, if, and when the current pause ends. We would like to see future pauses purely on humanitarian grounds. Visiting Israel a few days ago, my new Foreign Secretary set out our support for the Palestinian Authority and a two-state solution, as we look to the future and the security of both the Israelis and Palestinians.

And let me also thank you DG and your colleagues for your tireless efforts to support Ukrainians, particularly the displaced; condemn the Russian Federation's unprovoked and illegal war of aggression, and its attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure throughout Ukraine. The UK aligns itself with the joint statement to be made by my Ukrainian counterpart later today.

As you recognise Director General, global displacement continues to rise at an unprecedented rate. At a time when the impact of climate change on human mobility only exacerbates the level of global need it has never been more important to work together through IOM to create comprehensive and effective solutions.

We all have a responsibility to ensure that when a person migrates, they do so in a manner that's safe, orderly and regular. International cooperation remains essential, and let me pledge our support as the UK will work with all partners, on a 'whole-of-route' approach to addressing the challenges of irregular migration. We need to work in complementarity to ensure our development interventions address root causes and help migrants avoid the risks associated with onward movements.

The Global Compact for Migration provides an important framework for meeting these objectives. The UK welcomes IOM's role in driving forward its implementation. We also welcome the newly established Gender and Migration Research Policy Action Lab. So many of the challenges migrants face are dependent upon whether they are women or men, girls or boys. It is vital to consider gender sensitivity, gender perspective in discussions on migration and we look forward to further engagement with this initiative.

The UK remains committed to promoting strong internal justice mechanisms and prioritising reform, so IOM is well-equipped and efficiently managed to respond to the growing needs. One of the key strategic challenges for IOM remains how to strengthen your central functions while retaining the operational flexibility which we appreciate so much. We therefore encourage IOM to implement the recommendations in the UK's Central Assurance Assessment and the recent MOPAN and look forward to the new strategic approach in early 2024.

And last but far from least, another issue that will always be a priority for the UK, but in particular in the sixteen days pf preventing violence gender-based violence, is preventing sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment. Whilst we've seen significant investment and improvement in this area, we note that the Office of the Inspector General is operating at capacity and encourage a close focus on ensuring that it can continue to strengthen its efforts on this essential issue.

In concluding, let me thank the Director General and her leadership team, and all IOM staff for their continued commitment to migrants across the world.

Thank you.