BORDER MANAGEMENT AND THE ROLE OF IOM

I.   RATIONALE FOR ENHANCING BORDER MANAGEMENT

1.   The ability to address border management issues comprehensively and cooperatively is today a fundamental requirement for effective national governance, friendly international relations and full participation in international and regional institutions.

2.   Border management is inextricably linked to human development, human rights, human mobility and human security. In particular, there is now a recognized need to reduce impediments to the movement of both goods and people across borders in order to take full advantage of the opportunities presented by the global market.

3.   Efforts to enhance national and regional border management capacities have therefore become an important development issue, with countries looking to greater efficiencies to support higher levels of economic growth through improved trade and human mobility. Inefficient border processing systems, poorly conceived visa rules and outdated issuing processes and infrastructure militate against human mobility. There is now keen interest in harmonizing, streamlining and simplifying border management systems and processes.

4.   At the same time, the very processes that facilitate travel and economic and cultural exchange may also be exploited by those involved in transnational crimes such as trafficking, smuggling and terrorism. The international character of these activities makes a border checkpoint and the associated movement processing requirements (visas, travel documents, interviews and alert lists) a critical point of contact between law enforcement officials and persons moving internationally in connection with organized criminal activity. As a result, border management agencies - immigration, border patrol, customs and other agencies - play an important role in mitigating potential threats to national security. The challenge facing all border management agencies is how to balance effective regulatory control against the need to facilitate the movement of goods, services and people.

5.   Transnational criminal activity in its current form makes it increasingly difficult to discern between victims and culprits, particularly in cases involving human trafficking. Border management agencies need the capacities and training to be able to make the necessary distinctions and respond appropriately to the differing demands of each situation.

II.   IOM ACTIVITIES IN SUPPORT OF ENHANCED BORDER MANAGEMENT

6.   IOM takes a comprehensive and integrated approach to boosting State capacity to manage borders effectively and efficiently. This approach is based on the wider context of human mobility in a globalized world.

7.   IOM border management activities are developed and implemented under the guidance of the Technical Cooperation Division. They are undertaken in accordance with the IOM strategy (MC/INF/287), especially activities 2, 3 and 4. They are increasingly being implemented with relevant regional and international agencies such as the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Interpol, and the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Committee (UNCTC). In 2009,

the Technical Cooperation Division oversaw nearly 100 projects with budgets amounting to over USD 90 million.

8.   The Technical Cooperation Division seeks to ensure that IOM border management activities are consistent with three basic objectives: (a) to facilitate cross-border human mobility; (b) to enhance security; and (c) to promote compliance with relevant national and international laws.[1]

9.   IOM border management assistance to States covers, among other things, the following key areas:

- migration and border management assessments;
- border management information systems (BMIS);
- coordinated/integrated border management; and
- identity management.

Migration and border management assessments

10.   IOM migration and border management assessments are conducted within the framework of an established diagnostic template. This provides for a comprehensive analysis of the major elements of national border management structures and systems, including legislation, policy, procedures, travel documents, visa issuance, entry/exit controls, monitoring and reporting. The assessments are conducted with the assistance and active collaboration of national senior government officials responsible for migration and border management in the recipient country.

11.   The assessment is used to develop prioritized recommendations to improve the effectiveness of migration and border management and is broken down into four interrelated components (administration, regulatory framework, information technology and operations) that are each further desegregated into a number of distinct elements. An implementation plan (critical path design and identification of potential assistance) is formulated to support changes to national migration and border management practices. Some 20 assessments have been carried out around the globe, most recently in the Congo, Haiti and Namibia.

12.   In addition, IOM supports UNCTC national compliance country assessments conducted pursuant to United Nations Security Council resolution 1373. Recent examples of this collaboration include participation in assessments in Egypt, Cambodia and the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

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[1]   Including, but not limited to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (Palermo Protocol) and United Nations Security Council resolution 1373.

Border management information systems (BMIS)

13.   A BMIS should provide for a computerized system to collect and reconcile movement data and visa and passport information. A properly functioning BMIS expedites passenger clearance at border checkpoints and promotes the monitoring, collection and reporting of data on migration and mobility. It usually has an alert list function enabling officials to identify lost or stolen passports or persons of potential risk to the State. Among its many benefits, a properly functioning BMIS helps States identify irregular migration and human trafficking. It is a source of key data to inform national policymaking in connection with the flow of persons and goods.

14.   In recent years IOM has developed and refined its own BMIS/data collection system, known as the Personal Identification and Registration System (PIRS). The system is intended to function as an entry-level, comprehensive and affordable solution for States that have no, or an inadequate, data capture system. The PIRS runs on basic Microsoft software and is used to capture the biographic and biometric data of travellers entering and exiting through a border point. It has now been installed at border checkpoints in seven countries and there are plans to deploy it in support of regional integration in the East African Community. IOM deployment of the PIRS is a direct means of enhancing national capacity at border checkpoints.

Coordinated/integrated border management

15.   A whole-of-government approach like coordinated/integrated border management can be divided into two categories: (1) domestic integration (intra-service and inter-agency) between government agencies with border responsibilities within one country, and (2) international integration of such agencies between neighbouring countries. Both categories require inter-agency cooperation, parallel processing, and coordination at ports, harbours, and land border points of entry (collectively referred to as ports of entry) for optimum efficiency. For the second category, neighbouring or contracting national authorities must also cooperate with one another to align border-crossing facilities and procedures.

16.   IOM is promoting coordinated border management in a number of countries. In the Philippines, it recently helped develop a memorandum of understanding between a number of government agencies in support of data sharing; in the Western Balkans an integrated border management model is being implemented regionally; and one of the first training events organized at the newly-established IOM African Capacity-building Centre in Moshi, United Republic of Tanzania, focused on inter-agency and inter-State cooperation.

Identity management

17.   IOM is increasingly called upon to support stand-alone initiatives allowing governments to improve national identity management and travel documents. This includes helping governments assess, plan and implement improvements to international travel documents and their issuance systems in the light of the applicable travel document standards of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and ICAO.

18.   IOM also supports ICAO through direct engagement in three ICAO technical working groups: (a) the ICAO Implementation Capacity-building Working Group; (b) the ICAO New Technologies Working Group; and (c) the ICAO Technical Advisory Group. It provides

routine support to ICAO regional conferences and collaborated earlier this year on national travel document assessments in Haiti and Kiribati. Related collaboration in 2009 includes an IOM-led assessment with OSCE of the introduction of ICAO-compliant travel and identity documents in Armenia.

19. In addition, border management officials in many countries now benefit from IOM's comprehensive training curriculum on travel document inspection and use of associated equipment, including in relation to biometrics, visas and visa procedures. This entails working with national border experts and with regional entities such as the Organization of American States (OAS) and its Inter-American Committee Against Terrorism (CICTE).

III. CHALLENGES IN THE YEARS AHEAD

20. While a great deal of progress has been made in border management, many countries continue to face significant challenges and obstacles to improving border management and security. Four particular challenges are evident.

21. First is the need to share data within governments themselves and with governments in neighbouring countries and beyond. Regulated and standardized data collection, management and protection are essential to combat transnational crime, including terrorism, while upholding the rights of law-abiding citizens.

22. Second is the challenge of putting in place consistent and long-term support to help under-resourced countries address issues relating to border management. Too often, initial investments in border management systems are not sustained and the process stalls. In this context, bilateral government measures to improve governance at borders and border checkpoints in less developed countries can maximize their impact by partnering with IOM for ongoing engagement in support of sustainable reform.

23. Third is the challenge of seeing the security dimension in border management in a comprehensive manner that also takes into account the rationale for and realities of human mobility in a globalized world. At times, security initiatives appear to be designed for implementation on the territory of one State, but for the primary benefit of another State. Better security is in everyone's interest, and the priorities of the less vocal or less resourced States should be integrated into a full plan that suits and benefits all parties.

24. Finally, there is a need for professional standards among officers in the immigration and border management community. Well-trained officers who are accountable, work within a transparent framework of rules and regulations and are reasonably well paid and therefore not driven to look for alternative sources of income are essential to the success of improved border management at all levels.