

Statement by Director General of IOM at the UNHCR ExCOM

It is a honour for me to take the floor on behalf of Antonio Vitorino, the new Director General of the International Organization for Migration. This meeting of the UNHCR Executive Committee provides an opportunity to reflect on what was a critically important year for our partnerships with UNHCR, with our Member States and – most importantly –the migrants and refugees we serve.

UNHCR and IOM were created in 1951 to work together to find solutions for the very large numbers of refugees and displaced persons whose lives had been torn apart by the Second World War. This year our partnership extended to achieving the dual aims of the New York Declaration, to secure and strengthen the refugee regime through a Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) and to support the development of a Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM).

The finalization of both compacts, launched by the New York Declaration, and undertaken through different processes, constitute truly historic and remarkable achievements. They are historic because of their content: the new approaches to responsibility sharing embodied in the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework and the Global Compact on Refugees; and the Global Compact on Migration, for providing the first comprehensive framework for governance of migration. They are remarkable because they were achieved during this time when the narrative about migration is so negative: in this respect they represent our collective spirit and determination to counter reactive and populist policies aimed at short term and ultimately unsustainable objectives.

IOM applauds UNHCR for the excellent consultative process which led to the GCR, as well as the pioneering efforts of those 15 states and regional groupings who have worked with UNHCR to roll out the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework in their various contexts. You have demonstrated that dialogue in a global forum can indeed have impact on the ground.

In his Opening Statement, the High Commissioner has spoken eloquently and movingly about the refugee and humanitarian crises the world is confronted with in virtually all continents of the world, but also of the important practical gains that our organizations have made in addressing these situations.

UNHCR and IOM are collaborating more effectively and more innovatively than ever before, in addressing some of the most complex of these crisis: in Libya, where we work together in identifying solutions for mobile populations, including those in detention; the Mediterranean where we have developed joint initiatives which would allow us to fulfill the imperative of saving lives and offer a vision for more predictable disembarkation processes; in the context of our operations in Latin America and the Caribbean. I also would like to mention our three way collaboration on a UNCTD/UNHCR/IOM guide on entrepreneurship for migrants and refugees.

Ms. Kristalina Georgieva, the CEO of the World Bank, has also reminded us in her remarks, of the importance of addressing the drivers of flows and enhancing our capacities to respond. The GCR and the GCM contain intentionally similar and coherent provisions relating to the need to strengthen mechanisms to monitor and anticipate the development of risks and threats that might trigger or affect people movements, including joint analysis, enhancing preparedness measures, cooperation and responses. The future, as she said, is to do more and do more effectively: to bring our best efforts, our smarts, hearts and courage to these challenges. IOM pledges to do so, and to continue to work with states, UNHCR and other relevant stakeholders in a collaborative way to achieve these and other pressing global needs.