

**International Organization for Migration**  
Council 106<sup>th</sup> Session  
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## **Combining responses in a Comprehensive Plan of Action for Syrians and others moving in the Mediterranean region**

### **Statement of the International Catholic Migration Commission**

John K. Bingham, Head of Policy

Mr. Chair,

We speak today as a civil society practitioner; a long-standing and careful partner with IOM and UNHCR, governments and other NGOs. We work on the ground organizing humanitarian services to thousands of refugees and citizens in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria; in refugee identification and processing in 40 countries, including Greece and Turkey; and together with our members, in refugee resettlement and integration of tens of thousands of refugees in Europe and the United States in particular.

Today's displacement of Syrians and others is a humanitarian crisis. Whose crisis is it? The refugees and migrants.

On the response side, it is also, as Director General Swing puts it, a crisis of amnesia. We would suggest that we can together cure part of that amnesia by remembering how the *world*—not just one or two regions—stepped up with a combined global response to a similar movement of people forty years ago, in Southeast Asia. Much the same number of refugees and others were moving desperately, without legal channels, in dangerous journeys by boat and across land, with enormous suffering and death.

At that time, the international community came together to adopt a *Comprehensive Plan of Action*, combining a range of responses and mechanisms, including a substantial *Orderly Departure Program*.

Speaking in 1996, Sergio de Mello said: *"The CPA has been a model for multilateral cooperation, built on the principles of international solidarity, burden sharing, and proper acceptance of responsibilities. Its purposes were to end the ongoing tragedy on the high seas and to preserve asylum [...]. It has been successful."*

The CPA is widely recognized as one of the first examples of UNHCR-IOM partnership, with IOM playing a crucial role in the *Orderly Departure Program*, and collaborating in resettlement operations. ICMC and so many governments in this room and NGOs also joined in big pieces of the CPA, combining responses in ways that, though not perfect, concretely helped to reduce suffering and manage the situation.

Let's pick that up again, with urgency, adapting it where some things are different today and to make it even more protection-oriented and efficient.

***Is this "the" solution?*** Not the full solution, but major pieces of solution.

***Is this the "time" for it?*** Some say that since the attacks in Paris a few weeks ago, nothing (and maybe no one) can move anymore; forget any such planning! On the contrary, this is precisely the time for order—for bringing people within the system rather than thinking it possible to wall desperate human beings away as if they won't come anyway. It's precisely the time for careful organizing of the movement of people: for identification and differentiation that is centered on needs, rights and international legal obligations, like *non-refoulement* and protection of refugees, children, victims of torture and trafficking and other forced migrants.

In clearest terms, the choice today is not between "zero" refugees and migrants and a million: the choice is between a million moving in chaos and suffering and shadows, or a million moving in some order. It is time for more order, not less.

***Is there global support for this?*** In the global Sustainable Development Goals just adopted, all 193 governments committed—unanimously and with unprecedented energy—to facilitating safe, orderly and regular migration. That's exactly what the Orderly Departure Programme did, once already. We can do it again, and better. The new and welcome *Migration Governance Framework* that IOM members approved here Tuesday points in these directions, as do so many of your other frameworks on humanitarian action and crises.

***Should IOM once again take a leadership role?*** Of course!

Already working on the ground in all these places, you have the proper awareness that none of this is just "desk-top"—or deferrable in any way.

Already partnering with UNHCR and others in so many emergencies, you have the sense of essential partnership, with governments, UN bodies, and civil society—including migrants and refugees directly. It is a good sign that IOM member governments this week so enthusiastically endorsed IOM's negotiation of a closer relationship within the UN system.

May I close then with a question to Director General Swing: *sir, is IOM working, with partners, to develop something of a global Comprehensive Plan of Action for Syrians and others in the region, now?*

Thank you.