Mr Secretary General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,

Good morning, everyone.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak here today.

I join my colleagues in thanking the International Maritime Organization for arranging this meeting.

It can be very difficult to get so many agencies with different mandates and all stakeholders to come together, and I appreciate your efforts in this regard.

For those of you who are not familiar with the International Organization for Migration, IOM is the leading international organization in the field of migration.

We work on the full range of migration related issues, covering policy, capacity building in migration governance, direct assistance to migrants, and emergency response.

IOM is an inter-governmental organization with 157 member states, 10 observer states and over 100 observers among international and non-governmental organizations.

We are headquartered in Geneva, but over 95% of our around 9000 staff work in the field, at 480 offices across the globe.

We work closely with many of the other intergovernmental organizations represented here today, most notably UNHCR in view of the obvious intersections in our respective mandates.

IOM is of course engaged with the full range gamut of issues that touch on unsafe migration by sea, from community stabilization, job creation and development, through to labour migration and safe channels, to emergency response and offering assistance to migrants in crisis.

We have worked closely with states and with the other organizations in this room on these issues.

For example, IOM works with other organizations as part of the Global Migration Group (GMG), an inter-agency group bringing together 18 organizations whose work touches on issues related to migration.
As some of you know, the Global Migration Group has called for more concerted action to address unsafe sea journeys, most recently through an October 2014 decision by its principals.

**Need for Concerted Actions involving all Stakeholders/Questions that Arise**

We all know the context.

Today, one in every seven persons is a migrant.

Migration is drive by the imbalance between labour demand and supply, and continuing economic disparities between the Global North and Global South.

The Global North is aging and has and will continue to have for the foreseeable future jobs to be filled.

The Global South is far more youthful, but with some exceptions continues to experience a tepid rate of job creation.

The world is experiencing disasters on an unprecedented scale, including political upheaval and armed conflict.

Contemporary migratory movements continue to be marked by ever growing scale, complexity and risk.

That said, migration is still a long way from being addressed with the purpose, determination and coherence that have been achieved in other economic and social development fields.

There is, in fact, an appreciable discrepancy between the realities of migration and the available means and strategies to address them.

Consequently, many of the people on the move today are resorting to the use of services of people smugglers.

These complex migration flows place significant pressure on origin, transit and destination countries in terms of search and rescue at sea, reception and sheltering, processing of asylum claims, responding to needs of vulnerable groups, and addressing irregular migration from a law enforcement perspective.

The main focus at present is on the Mediterranean, but migrants are dying in the Red Sea between Obock, Djibouti and Yemen en route to Saudi Arabia; in the waters between South Asia and Australia; in the Sahara Desert; in the Caribbean between Haiti and south Florida; and on the land border between Mexico and the United States; and elsewhere.

Governments and organizations have tried to address this growing phenomenon, but there are some elements that are missing, which is one of the reasons I am very happy to be with you here today.
This meeting is a significant opportunity to hear from organizations, government agencies and private sector stakeholders with whom we don’t usually have contact, that is, those who are most concerned with issues related to maritime traffic and managing safe journeys across the sea.

IOM would like to hear from you regarding your approach to this most pressing problem that is resulting in significant loss of life across the Mediterranean, as well as in other regions where migrants die making dangerous sea journeys, like the Gulf of Aden, Bay of Bengal, and the Caribbean.

I would like to hear about the challenges you face in governing international waterways, and in taking on search and rescue operations.

I would like to understand more about your industry and how you view the role of smugglers in making possible these illegal operations.

Why is it that the owners of Ghost Ships can send them into the water with impunity?

How often have smugglers, ship owners or port authorities been brought to justice for their role in dangerous sea journeys?

Why was the international community successful in combatting piracy, but is so much less successful in dealing effectively with migrant smuggling?

What can we do to address the issue of unacceptable loss of life in the Mediterranean?

And when I say “we” I mean everyone in this room, particularly governments and the private sector who have so much more control and influence to identify criminal actors and to save migrants in distress.

Allow me to make the IOM position as outlined by the Director General very clear:

The IOM Director General has called for more action on dangerous journeys and migrant smuggling.

He has called the loss of life in the Mediterranean a tragedy and a crime.

He is very concerned about what he sees as an inadequate response by all actors, including states, the private sector and international organizations.

He has raised particular concerns about the end of *Mare Norstrum*, and he worries that the current resources allocated for saving lives in the Mediterranean are not sufficient.

He considers the current loss of life because of dangerous sea journeys a humanitarian emergency.

He has called for more concerted action by the international community to save lives and to counter migrant smuggling, since so many of the boats are able to leave shore thanks to the facilitation of criminal networks.

He has called for greater action to identify and prosecute smugglers and others who prey on desperate migrants.
He has called for countries, not only in Europe, to start opening significant additional legal migration channels, including for labour migrants and to facilitate family reunification.

He has called for more resettlement options and larger resettlement quotas.

IOM also seeks durable solutions for communities experiencing poverty and hopelessness and which are therefore prone to high outward migration pressure, especially as regards the youth.

These are all medium to long term solutions that countries and other stakeholders need to support.

In the short term, there is a greater need to assist migrants in distress en route as well as once they arrive on shore.

I wish to conclude by noting the following:

This is the beginning of the summer season, when we may see an increase in movement across the Mediterranean.

The situation is only going to get worse.

We are seeing disturbing new trends, like the so-called “Ghost Ships” that have no captain.

Our office in Italy is witnessing a higher increase of unaccompanied minors, that is, children put on these boats without family, to make the journey on their own, who, even if they arrive safely in Europe, are left with no assistance or network to help them.

Most importantly and immediately, there is urgent need for a greater commitment to search and rescue operations to save lives.

IOM’s Director General does not think Operation Triton will be able to deal with the traffic we anticipate over the summer months.

We need to focus on identifying concrete and practical solutions, and to enhance international cooperation.

I would be particularly interested to hear your thoughts on how we can improve search and rescue and how we can discourage ship owners and operators from supporting migrant smuggling.

We will therefore be listening to you very keenly in the course of the day today to help us understand your perspective and what you see as possible solutions.

Thank you again, Secretary General, and Mr. Chair, for the opportunity to speak today. I very much look forward to the discussion.