IOM statement at the Maritime Security Committee, IMO HQ London, 9 June 2015

Chairman, Secretary General, Distinguished delegates,

Yesterday’s figures show that 101,900 persons have been smuggled across the Mediterranean already in 2015, this before the season has fully begun. Already there are around 2,000 recorded deaths this year. On the Andaman sea and Bay of Bengal this year has seen 25,000 smuggled persons, 160,000 since 2012. Those surviving have done so along a “trail of tears”, we have seen the gruesome practise of “smugglers camps”.

These are not the only situations of irregular migration, it also occurs on the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, the Caribbean and unaccompanied minors are smuggled from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras.

IOM has recently document in a publications some 50,000 migrant deaths since 2000 which does not represent the total figure but gives and indication of the grave state of affairs.

This situation has led to increased activity in the last months within the international community. IOM’s director general was invited on 29 of May to a meeting among South-East Asian counties on smuggling of persons organised by the Thai government in Bangkok, as well as the European Parliament as the European Commission unveiled a series of measured to contrast the phenomenon of peoples smuggling across the Mediterranean. IOM/UNHCR/UNODC/OHCHR/SRSG on migration issues recently issued a joint statement in wake of the situation of smuggling on the Andaman Sea.

Throughout these meetings IOM has had one key message namely the over-all imperative to save lives of migrants and refugees, and later to determine the adequate steps.

Chairman, permit me to make the following three points that we feel should be kept in mind as we continue our discussions on these matters:

**Perfect storm** – (i) We are in an age of unprecedented mobility with one out of seven on the planet in some kind of migratory status, internally or across borders. Travel opportunities and internet is making our planet smaller; (ii) Currently there is the highest number of forced migrants since World War II, 50 millions are currently displaced and displacements are becoming protracted reaching an average of nine years; (iii) There are five major concurrently running crises/conflicts with no solution in sight in the short or medium term; (iv) We face increasing anti-migrant sentiment and fear of terrorism.

**Keeping perspective** – (i) Migration is a normal state of affairs and is in human DNA; (ii) Migration is driver of development as mentioned in the post-2015 development agenda process; (iii) Irregular migration is still relatively low in numbers and can be absorbed; (iv) What is abnormal are the current extreme push-factors that make migrants risk their lives, which we need to address urgently.
Practical steps – (i) Government capacity has to include foresight and planning for necessary future measures; (ii) Assisted voluntary return and reintegration needs to ready as a possibility; (iii) Stronger measures should be taken against smugglers; (iv) Humanitarian border management needs to become more widespread; (v) More avenues for legal migration like labour migration, family reunification and resettlement (as recently announced by EU) need to be made available.

Lastly, IOM and IMO have a long standing collaboration and we as organisations are looking at the updating of our current Memorandum of Understanding identifying areas of cooperation to address current challenges

Thank you for your attention.