

# Statement of the International Organization for Migration

Director General, William Lacy Swing

for the

3<sup>rd</sup> World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, Sendai, Japan

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## **I. A World On The Move**

We live in an era of the greatest human mobility in recorded history. One in every seven persons is a migrant: one-fourth crossing international borders; and three-quarters moving internally. Together, they would constitute the sixth most populous nation, with the GDP of, at least, a medium-size European country.

Large-scale migration is therefore already a mega-trend of our time. Population movements are one of the most functional dynamics of our modern, inter-connected and globalized world.

We are also living in an era of unprecedented disasters and in a world largely out of control, including a serious erosion of moral authority and leadership. Today a very large percentage of human mobility is involuntary, forced movement or displacement, more than at any other time since World War II, some 50 million persons.

Besides demography – historically high owing to the quadrupling of the world's population in the last century, the digital revolution, distance-shrinking technology and labor demand – increasing numbers of people are fleeing armed conflict (in Syria, Iraq, South Sudan, Ukraine and elsewhere) political insecurity and persecution, and natural and slow-onset climatic disasters.

40,000 alone have died along migratory routes since 2000, in the Caribbean, the Mediterranean, the Bay of Bengal, the Red Sea, in the Sahara and other deserts. This can and must be stopped.

Human mobility, whether planned or unplanned, forced or voluntary, determine how and where people live, and shape the social, cultural and economic life of individuals and communities.

## **II. A Timely World Conference**

These are the urgent underpinnings of our meeting this week. This is why we are here.

We have been following with close interest the consultations leading up to this conference, and have been reassured by the increasing attention being given to migration, displacement and

relocation. The various references to human mobility in the current text capture the complexity and importance of population movements – as a key dynamic of risk and resilience – and will create a stronger, more comprehensive “post-2015 framework”.

Population displacement is one of the main consequences of disasters, and, yet, it was not until the UNFCCC meeting at Cancun in 2010 that it appeared in a UNFCCC / COP declaration. Likewise, the MDGs are silent on migration, displacement and relocation.

Let’s correct these earlier oversights by including migration and population displacement in the text of the “Post-2015 Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction”.

We also need to include migrants and displaced persons in the design and implementation of DRR plans, comprehensively, at national, regional and international levels as these groups are too often “invisible”, forgotten and unaccounted for when disaster strikes.

### **III. A Call To Action**

Given the state of a world in disarray, we must give priority to action – and action calls for partnerships.

Throughout the implementation period of the Hyogo Framework for Action, IOM has been heavily engaged with many of you in addressing all the major disasters globally – include as of yesterday, that of Vanuatu.

As we speak, IOM is joining the UN advance team on its way to Vanuatu, and we will be working with the government to provide immediate help and support to those who are displaced in government buildings, schools and churches; to provide shelter upon return; and psycho-social support in the response and recovery phases. In this regard, I approved yesterday an initial allocation from IOM’s Migration Emergency Funding Mechanism to ensure a rapid start-up and response to the disaster inflicted by Cyclone Pam in Vanuatu.

Our thoughts and prayers are with the people of Vanuatu and we stand in solidarity with President Baldwin Lansdale.

In this and in moving ahead with the new framework agreement on disaster risk reduction and resilience, I pledge IOM’s continued commitment and readiness to do more. We must all do more – and in partnership – to help build the resilience of people, countries and societies to implement the Framework.