



# The Government of Yemen, IOM and UNHCR hold a Regional Conference on Migration and Asylum: the Sana'a declaration is launched!

**Sana'a, 11-13 November 2013** - The International Organization for Migration (IOM) jointly supported with the UNHCR the organization by the Yemeni Ministry of Foreign Affairs of a three-day regional conference on Asylum and Migration from the Horn of Africa (HOA) to Yemen.

Each year, thousands of Ethiopian migrants, Somali and other asylum seekers and refugees make the journey from the Horn of Africa across the treacherous Gulf of Aden, the Arabian and Red seas, facing perilous conditions and serious risks of abuse and exploitation, resulting in thousands of them remaining stranded, destitute, sick and injured and in the hands of international traffickers. They use Yemen as a gateway to reach the Gulf countries and beyond, seeking better opportunities, or fleeing from persecution.

The conference brought together representatives from Bahrain, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Yemen and the UAE, as well as the GCC, the Arab League, IOM and UNHCR to review progress and challenges to-date by each participating country in the management of complex migration flows from the HOA, to, and through Yemen. The first two days of technical level, frank and informative exchanges by experts from each participating country were followed by a Ministerial level session on the third day.

In opening the Experts Session, Mr. Pasquale Lupoli, IOM Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa, highlighted how the composition and nature of irregular flows from the HoA to Yemen have changed considerably in recent years and now consist predominantly of migrants. He applauded Yemen's efforts to bring together, in a regional consultative process, countries in its neighborhood, spanning as it does the two continents, Africa and the Middle East. He referred to the recent progress made



by the Government of Yemen in conjunction with the Government of Ethiopia and IOM in freeing migrants from smugglers and arranging urgent humanitarian assistance, identification and return.

The Ministerial Session was chaired by the Yemeni Minister of Interior, in conjunction with the IOM Deputy Director General, Ambassador Laura Thompson, and UNHCR Head of Protection. Ministers and Heads of Delegations from the participating countries to the Conference adopted the Sana'a Declaration recommendations in the following fields: addressing the root causes of asylum and migration; strengthening law enforcement in cases concerning irregular migration; increasing support for irregular migrant return programs; enhancing cooperation in the employment opportunities field; raising-awareness campaigns on the

risk of irregular migration; enhancing protection systems in asylum issues; regional and international cooperation on addressing asylum and migration issues; and, collecting and analyzing data on refugees and migrants

In inaugurating the Ministerial session, IOM's Deputy Director General, Ambassador Laura Thompson stated that "Migration is a cross-border phenomenon; as such, it should be placed in a broader context of regional cooperation and regional policy developments. The rise in interstate cooperation and sustained dialogue we have witnessed over the past two decades in particular at the regional and, more recently, at the inter-regional and global levels, is clear evidence that governments know that isolated positions and policies are no longer an option in today's world."

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