



**SOUTH AFRICAN PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS AND
OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS**

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**STATEMENT BY MS FATIMA CHOCHAN, DEPUTY MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS,
ON THE OCCASION OF THE 100th SESSION OF THE IOM COUNCIL**

**Geneva, Switzerland
Tuesday, 6 December 2011**

Mr Chairman,

Mr Director-General,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Goeie dag, Good afternoon, Molweni, Lumela, Sanibona. These are greetings in just five of the eleven official languages of South Africa. All five languages appear in our national anthem, which celebrates the diversity that comes from centuries of migration into South Africa; and where through our democratic transformation, we are engaged in building a free, non-racial and non-sexist society.

It is an honour for me to address you today on behalf of the Government of South Africa during this 100th Council Session of the International Organisation of Migration on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the IOM. We are especially pleased to congratulate the Chairman on his election and Zimbabwe on its election as Rapporteur. We also extend our congratulations to all the new members of the IOM, and especially to our good neighbour, Mozambique, which is a key partner in managing migration in the Southern African Development Community; and which has also now been afforded observer status at the IOM.

The Minister of Home Affairs, Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, should have been with us today but she is attending COP 17, which is currently underway in Durban. Given our mutual interest in a more sustainable world, perhaps at the 65th Anniversary of the IOM, we will receive a report Mr Chairman and the Director-General on the reduction of the IOM's carbon foot print.

The basic principle of managing migration with dignity and for development resonates very strongly with South Africans. Domestic and regional migration under colonialism and apartheid was used to reduce Africans to a mere source of cheap labour with no rights to residence or citizenship. The past seventeen years has indeed seen dramatic changes with respect to migration in the new South Africa, although very serious challenges still remain.

Migration is a human activity that has historically shaped and enriched society and continues to do so. This progressive, outward-looking view is expressed in our Constitution, which commits South Africa to being a responsible member of the international community; to honouring international agreements; and to working collectively for peace, security and a better life for all people. Migration is inseparable from development and the South African government has repeatedly stated its support for the policy of integrated regional development adopted by the Southern African Development Community. This includes working towards the free movement of people, goods and capital within the region once there is sufficient harmonisation of immigration policies, systems and practices. The assistance rendered by the IOM in developing immigration systems across a number of regions is highly relevant in this context.

Globalisation, characterised by the rapid and increasing flows of trade, people and information, brings risks of domestic and international conflict, terrorism and crime together with potential development opportunities for migrants for sending and receiving countries. This explains why many countries, including South Africa, are currently reviewing their immigration policies and upgrading systems in order to manage immigration securely, effectively and humanely. The promotion of the idea of orderly migration and the expansion of cooperation by the IOM is again highly relevant in this global context.

We would like to highlight two of the specific migration challenges faced by South Africa and the steps we are taking in response. The first problem is that South Africa currently attracts the highest number of individual asylum seekers in the world, approximately 90% of whom are economic migrants taking advantage of legal loopholes and an asylum seeker system which is overwhelmed. This situation disadvantages genuine refugees and adds impetus to the criminal syndicates that

are smuggling persons from as far as Asia. The Government is taking robust action to end this abuse, including reviewing legislation, improving our management systems and strengthening counter-corruption mechanisms. Another element of the strategy is to engage with states in our region and beyond and to build strategic partnerships with the IOM and other relevant international organisations.

Our Parliament is currently seized with legislation that criminalizes the trafficking of persons. This form of modern slavery is a scourge that all decent people should aim to eliminate. Women and young girls in particular are victims of organised traffickers and usually end up in the sex trade.

The second major challenge pertains to the management of migration flows in the region, which consists largely of economic migrants with relatively low skill levels who use all means to enter and work in South Africa as the largest economy in the region. South Africa, 17 years after the end of apartheid, has severe problems of unemployment, low skill levels amongst the youth and uneven development of our communities. It is therefore imperative that migration flows are more appropriately managed in the interest of security and development. Given the existing competition for scarce resources such as housing, jobs and services, failure to do so will inevitably invite xenophobic tendencies. Reaching this goal is going to require immense coordination and cooperation.

Further assistance of the IOM and other international partners in strengthening national and regional efforts would be greatly appreciated in this context. Meanwhile, South Africa is taking bold steps to normalise the situation of undocumented SADC nationals, such as the 275 000 Zimbabweans who took advantage of a recent moratorium on deportation and prosecution to apply for visas with great assistance from the Zimbabwean government.

We wish to conclude by affirming that we are placing a high priority on dealing with migration challenges in 2012 and look forward to robust and regular discussions with the IOM and with partner countries in our region and further afield.