

International Organization for Migration (IOM)

Inputs to the Secretary-General's Report on Oceans and the Law of the Sea

16 June 2023

- **Chapter V, Importance of Human Dimension**

IOM, also as Coordinator of the UN Network on Migration, is the key agency that offers support to national authorities in the establishment of regular and safe migration pathways. IOM has been engaging with the Member States at the regional and national levels to strengthen the mechanisms and institutional frameworks that relate to migration by sea through consultations, capacity development initiatives, support to policy development and technical assistance.

Irregular movements of vessels and people at sea are becoming a major challenge for the future management of international and cross-border maritime mobility and the protection of those most in need. Identifying concrete ways to enable safe and legal cross-border human mobility in the maritime context, including measures to protect the most vulnerable, is key to sustainable development. As an example of such effort, Ship to Shore Rights South East Asia (SEA) is a multi-country, multi-annual initiative of the European Union (EU) and the United Nations (UN), implemented by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in collaboration with International Organization for Migration (IOM) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Its overriding objective is to promote regular and safe labour migration and decent work for all migrant workers in the fishing and seafood processing sectors in Southeast Asia.

- **Chapter VI, Maritime Safety and Security**

IOM supports Governments in assisting migrants in distress at sea along the deadliest migratory routes in the world, being part of the Inter-Agency Group for the Protection of Migrants and Refugees moving by Sea. The group is composed of UN Agencies and other international stakeholders and works to enhance joint advocacy on key aspects related to Maritime Safety and security such as SAR, disembarkation procedure, safe harbour, among others.

Crime on the high seas is becoming increasingly sophisticated, endangering human life, national security, economic growth and global safety. Maritime security requires appropriate border control measures along maritime border crossing points to help States better deal with transnational organized crime including piracy, terrorism, migrant smuggling, trafficking in persons and arms proliferation.

To facilitate the safe, orderly and regular movement of goods and persons also by Sea, IOM supports Member States in enhancement of maritime security by providing technical guidance on appropriate policies, legislation, administrative structures, and operational systems.

IOM works with Government, civil society and relevant stakeholder to ensure the protection of migrant workers employed on fishing vessels, focusing on most vulnerable like women and minors. Counter-trafficking and counter-smuggling capacity building initiatives, including training and analysis of data and trends, are useful tools to be included in the curricula for law enforcement officials. Similarly, assistance and follow-up to vulnerable cases must be ensured after disembarkation through the involvement of governmental and non-governmental stakeholders.

Absence of proof of legal identity prevents all migrants from exercising basic human rights and accessing essential services, particularly those working in the informal sector on the seas or those who have lost their

documentation on precarious sea journeys. Civil registration and identity management systems and consular sections of Member States in issuing, verifying and protecting civil documents and biometrics data that facilitate access to rights, services and global mobility is paramount.

- **Chapter V, Importance of Human Dimension, art 38.** For Mariela and Florence to add on the workstream on actionable recommendations on missing migrants and provision of humanitarian assistance to migrants in distress.

In 2022, the UN Network on Migration, comprised of 29 UN entities, established a workstream to respond to the mandate contained in paragraph 76 of the Progress Declaration of the first International Migration Review Forum to prepare “actionable recommendations on strengthening cooperation on missing migrants and providing humanitarian assistance to migrants in distress, including by collaborating with humanitarian actors, (...), with the aim of preventing loss of life in transit”. The workstream will focus on providing humanitarian assistance including those rescued at sea. The UN Network on Migration is consulting with a broad range of stakeholders to develop recommendations which will be included in the next biennial report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the GCM due in 2024.

- **Chapter VII, Climate change and the ocean, and Chapter VIII, Ocean sustainability**

Climate change and unsustainable use of natural resources pose an imminent threat to ocean-based communities already severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. This reality is particularly acute in Small Islands and Developing States (SIDS), many of which are heavily dependent on their fisheries resources for economic development, government revenue, food security and livelihoods, and are vulnerable to any change in the status of these resources. Coastal communities are threatened in their very existence, exposed to adverse factors that compel people to move, and can drive migration and lead to forced displacement.

At the same time, and as human mobility dynamics are closely interlinked with risks and opportunities in coastal areas, understanding the complex reasons that compel people to move and addressing them as part of a comprehensive response to address threats to the ocean and restore its health for prosperity in order to realize the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including Goal 14, is essential. This can inform policy interventions to increase the resilience of coastal communities and reduce disaster risks.

Planned and well-managed human mobility can also play a key role for advancing the **conservation and sustainable use of coastal resources**, and for the **preservation of the marine environment and marine biodiversity**. People on the move contribute knowledge and skills transfer, innovation, entrepreneurship, social, and cultural capital that they acquire and develop abroad, and that is transferred to communities of origin. For instance, non-nationals make up a disproportionate share of the patents submitted for approval in many countries (WIPO); and a recent study has shown that every additional 1 per cent of immigration has the potential to boost GDP growth by 2 per cent in destination countries. This is in addition to supporting economies and boosting GDP of countries of origin through remittances and other mechanisms (IMF). Since 2015, remittances have been the largest source of external finance flows to low-and middle-income countries (LMICs) other than China. They are greater and more stable than both foreign direct investment (FDI) and official development assistance (ODA) and have a knock-on effect on development and societies. They contribute to mitigate and adapt to challenges and shocks that would otherwise drive forced migration: they provide a stable source of income and pay for necessities. The skills of migrant workers can fill key labour market needs in the transition to a blue economy, whilst supporting training and re-skilling of local communities in emerging economic sectors. Further, seasonal migration pathways can allow communities in climate affected areas to counter the impact of climate change on local income opportunities.