



# Security Council

Seventy-eighth year

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New York

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<i>President:</i>	Mr. Hoxha . . . . .	(Albania)
<i>Members:</i>	Brazil . . . . .	Mr. Moretti
	China . . . . .	Mr. Dai Bing
	Ecuador . . . . .	Mr. Montalvo Sosa
	France . . . . .	Mr. De Rivière
	Gabon . . . . .	Mr. Nanga
	Ghana . . . . .	Mr. Korbich
	Japan . . . . .	Mrs. Shino
	Malta . . . . .	Mrs. Frazier
	Mozambique . . . . .	Mr. Afonso
	Russian Federation . . . . .	Mr. Nebenzia
	Switzerland . . . . .	Mr. Hauri
	United Arab Emirates . . . . .	Ms. Shaheen
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Phipps
	United States of America . . . . .	Mr. Wood

## Agenda

Maintenance of international peace and security

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*The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.*

### **Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

### **Maintenance of international peace and security**

**The President:** In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Ms. Ruven Menikdiwela, Director of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in New York, and Mr. Pär Liljert, Director of the International Organization for Migration Office to the United Nations.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I give the floor to Ms. Menikdiwela.

**Ms. Menikdiwela:** I would like to express the appreciation of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for this opportunity to brief the members of the Security Council and other invited participants on critical issues relating to the protection and human rights of refugees and migrants involved in irregular sea movements from North Africa to Europe.

As a front-line humanitarian agency — and despite our advocacy, assistance and other efforts with States to alleviate human suffering — we continue to bear witness to the tragedies of lives lost at sea and on land routes with no end in sight. Please bear with me, Mr. President, while I provide some numbers that provide a sobering picture of the dimensions of the problem. Between January and August of this year, it is estimated that more than 102,000 refugees and migrants attempted to cross the central Mediterranean Sea to Europe from Tunisia alone, a 260 per cent increase compared to last year, in addition to more than 45,000 people from Libya. Some 31,000 people were rescued at sea or intercepted and disembarked in Tunisia, in addition to 10,600 in Libya. Departures from Algeria were more limited, with almost 4,700 arrivals in Spain by August, an increase of 18 per cent compared to last year. In addition, a total of 3,700 people were rescued or intercepted by the Algerian authorities during the same period, a 68 per cent increase from last year. In total, between January and 24 September some 186,000 people reached Southern Europe by sea — in Italy, Greece, Spain, Cyprus and Malta — with the vast

majority, more than 130,000 people, arriving in Italy, an increase of 83 per cent compared to the same period in 2022.

By 24 September, more than 2,500 people were accounted dead or missing in 2023 alone. That number represents a two-thirds increase over the total of 1,680 people for the same period in 2022. Lives are also being lost on land, away from public attention. The journey from West Africa, or from the eastern Horn of Africa, to Libya and onward to points of departure on the coast, remains one of the most dangerous in the world. Refugees and migrants travelling along the land routes from sub-Saharan Africa risk death and gross human rights violations at every step.

The high departure rates in Tunisia result from perceptions of insecurity among refugee communities, following incidents of racially motivated attacks and hate speech, as well as collective expulsions from Libya and Algeria. That is taking place in a broader context of the deterioration in the security situation of several countries neighbouring North Africa, triggering more secondary movements, with land arrivals and asylum-seeker registrations in Tunisia seeing a marked increase this year. While UNHCR is dealing with restrictions in registration in Libya, nearly 50,000 refugees and asylum seekers there are nevertheless registered with our Office. The fact that UNHCR is not authorized to access some disembarkation points controlled by entities involved in interception and rescue at sea limits our ability to assist the people who are disembarked and brought to detention centres.

The conditions for thousands of refugees and migrants in both official and unofficial detention facilities in Libya remain of grave concern. UNHCR continues to advocate for ensuring the registration of all persons seeking international refugee protection and is seeking Libya's support to ensure access to them and appropriate responses for them. UNHCR also remains concerned about the disembarkation in Libya of refugees and migrants rescued or intercepted at sea, since Libya is not a place of safety for the purposes of disembarkation following rescue at sea. While UNHCR recognizes States' sovereign and legal right to engage with other States and take measures to enhance the management of their borders, effective border management is compatible with respect for human rights. UNHCR, together with the International Organization for Migration and other partners, is committed to assisting the Tunisian and the Libyan authorities in addressing the mixed movements of refugees and migrants arriving at their borders.

The situation on Lampedusa, Italy, is cause for serious concern. The UNHCR recognizes the difficulties posed by the very large number of people arriving simultaneously on a small island, where reception capacities are limited. The UNHCR is present on Lampedusa to support the authorities and appreciates their efforts to quickly decongest the island. That is a top priority in order to ensure that people, including the most vulnerable people, get the assistance they need. While the solidarity of the people of Lampedusa is laudable, Italy cannot be left on its own to respond to the needs of the arrivals. The UNHCR has repeatedly called for the establishment of an agreed regional disembarkation and redistribution mechanism for people who arrive by sea, in a spirit of responsibility-sharing and solidarity with front-line States.

As recently emphasized by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the challenges of mixed movements of refugees and migrants require a panoramic approach to population movements. That implies moving away from the sole focus of controlling arrivals at borders to looking at their geographical complexity and doing so at all steps of their migratory routes, including by addressing the root causes in the countries of origin, such as conflict and violence interacting with climate change, weak governance and lack of development.

At the core of that approach is the recognition of the importance of the right to seek asylum at borders without being turned away or violently pushed back. People should not be prevented from seeking protection under international human rights law and international refugee law. The route-based approach also calls for renewed efforts to establish proper, legal and substantive migration pathways to keep economies and social systems going, as well as to provide proper entry points for migrants and complementary pathways for refugees.

UNHCR has four urgent recommendations in the context of today's meeting.

First, with regard to human rights safeguards, any cooperation or assistance provided by other States to the Libyan or Tunisian authorities for border management purposes should ensure that the human rights of refugees and migrants are upheld.

Secondly, with regard to increased search-and-rescue efforts at sea, all Mediterranean States must urgently step up those efforts and implement effective

and predictable disembarkation mechanisms. Saving lives at sea and providing humanitarian assistance is one of the most basic obligations of humankind, and those performing rescue operations or helping in good faith should not be penalized for doing so.

Thirdly, with regard to the prosecution of smugglers and traffickers, all States must renew their efforts to cooperate in order to effectively investigate and prosecute smugglers and traffickers and those who enable those crimes to be committed on such a large scale, while also protecting the victims of such trafficking.

Fourthly, with regard to resettlement and complementary pathways, UNHCR urges all States to strengthen investments in development and inclusion in countries of asylum and transit, remove barriers to accessing family reunification and expand resettlement quotas for refugees in Libya and those evacuated to the emergency transit mechanisms. The resettlement quotas for refugees in other North African countries, as well as other pathways for refugees and migrants, should also be increased.

Finally, from 13 to 15 December, UNHCR, together with Switzerland, Colombia, France, Japan, Jordan and Uganda, will be organizing the second Global Refugee Forum in Geneva. We call on States and other stakeholders to use that opportunity to advance their commitments to addressing the challenges of mixed movements through transformational pledges that can translate those four urgent recommendations into actions to save lives.

**The President:** I thank Ms. Menikdiwela for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Liljert.

**Mr. Liljert:** On behalf of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and as the Director of the IOM Office to the United Nations here in New York, I would like to acknowledge the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation for initiating this important discussion and granting the IOM the opportunity to address the Security Council. We would like to begin by highlighting the dire conditions facing the migrants and refugees traversing the many known mixed-movement routes, an issue that has brought us here for today's discussion.

The Mediterranean Sea has historically been a region that has witnessed the significant and sustained movement of people. However, in recent decades, it has

been at the forefront of global attention owing to the migration of thousands of people crossing its waters annually in search of asylum or new opportunities. Many of those individuals, in the absence of alternative options, resort to often risky and dangerous methods to reach their destination, with irregular migration to Europe being the most visible.

The IOM is cognizant of the staggering numbers of migrant deaths and missing migrants worldwide, with the most dangerous corridors that migrants and refugees navigate being regularly recorded by our Missing Migrants Project. Recent data demonstrates that from January to September, more than 187,000 individuals crossed the Mediterranean in pursuit of a better future and the promise of safety. Tragically, during that same period, the IOM recorded 2,778 deaths, with 2,093 of them occurring along the treacherous central Mediterranean route. While significant attention is dedicated to deaths at sea, the stories shared by migrants suggest that several tragedies may be going unnoticed, especially during the crossing of the Sahara Desert.

Despite the emergence of other significant migration routes in recent years, the Central Mediterranean route remains the most dangerous. Yet despite its clear dangers, in 2023 there has been an increase by more than 300 per cent in arrivals to Greece along that route. Meanwhile, by contrast, the number of arrivals in Spain, which are primarily through the Atlantic route to the Canary Islands, have remained steady as compared to the numbers recorded at the same time last year.

In 2023, the IOM has witnessed a significant increase in arrivals by sea to Europe as compared to 2022, with more than 130,000 individuals arriving this year compared to approximately 70,000 in 2022. Notably, the transit and departure points in the Central Mediterranean route have evolved to also include Tunisia, with the route through and from Tunisia showing increased departures compared to recent years.

The impact of the recent upheavals in the Sudan, which have resulted in significant displacement, has also become visible in the demography of those arriving in Europe through the central Mediterranean route. For example, in August, 1,294 Sudanese transited through Tunisia. Land crossings from Libya to Tunisia have also increased, with migrants coming directly from Libya to Sfax, Tunisia, and beyond.

Discrimination, xenophobic attacks and negative narratives against migrants and refugees are unfortunately increasing along the Mediterranean route,

and that is a concern. The IOM urges all States to ensure the safety and dignity of those within their borders, as per the applicable international instruments.

The IOM advocates for a human rights-based approach that prioritizes saving lives, ensuring predictable disembarkation and promoting responsibility-sharing, and we remain concerned about the migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers who are intercepted at sea and returned to places not considered safe for returns. Individuals returned to unsafe locations often end up in appalling conditions in detention centres, where they are exposed to abuse and extortion. As of 16 September, a total of 10,992 migrants have been intercepted at sea and returned to potential dangers, including 276 in the second week of September alone.

We also cannot ignore the exacerbating impact of climate change and food insecurity in countries of origin and transit, which affects living conditions and contributes to further displacement and irregular migration. The 2021 World Bank report *Groundswell Part 2: Acting on Internal Climate Migration* indicated that across the six regions considered, as many as 216 million people could be forced to migrate within their countries by 2050. In the light of those challenges, the IOM strongly encourages the expansion of safe and regular migration pathways. Such pathways have the potential to reduce the use of irregular channels and prevent unnecessary loss of life.

The IOM is actively supporting the promotion of labour mobility schemes and capacity development activities between countries to facilitate regular entry for skilled migrant workers and empower communities in countries of origin and transit. Furthermore, avenues for safe and dignified returns, readmission and sustainable reintegration must be promoted. The IOM has seen progress in recent agreements such as the memorandum of understanding on a strategic and global partnership between the European Union and Tunisia, which was signed in July 2023, and the Rome process launched in July 2023, which we hope will reinforce the shared international commitment to address the political, socioeconomic and climate drivers of migration and foster regular and safe pathways for migration.

The IOM also notes that principles such as respect for national sovereignty, shared responsibility, solidarity and the safety and dignity of all migrants, within the framework of international law, should continue to

be embedded in these agreements and offer us a new model for cooperation between countries who aim to facilitate regular migration opportunities among them.

As the world is experiencing higher rates of conflict, disasters and environmental degradation than at any time in the past three decades, compounded by glaring inequalities and increased poverty, we can expect more and more people to embark on these kinds of dangerous journeys. To address this, allow me to reiterate a few important recommendations on behalf of our organization.

First, the international community needs to actively identify solutions and pathways to foster regular migration, in conjunction with working actively to combat the smuggling and trafficking of migrants along migratory routes. It is essential to strengthen the application of national legislation, support national anti-trafficking agencies, collect data on trafficking cases, provide victim-centred direct assistance and enhance cross-border cooperation for comprehensive victim assistance. Further, the regularization measures for migrants, who often do not qualify for refugee status, can offer protection and stability. Regular pathways for admission and stay should be enhanced in the form of humanitarian visas, temporary protection permits, private sponsorships, education opportunities, temporary work permits, planned relocation, family reunification and medical evacuations.

Secondly, we need to ensure that the rights of those who find themselves in irregular situations are respected. States, as duty bearers, hold the primary responsibility to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of all individuals within their jurisdiction or effective control. Collectively, we need to support national and regional authorities and their capacity to prevent and resolve forced displacements and to identify root causes and monitor trends of disasters and conflicts, including work with communities affected by such movements, to build their resilience to the root causes, including by improving community cohesion.

Thirdly, we must recognize that solutions to irregular migration cannot solely rely on preventing departures but must also rely on ensuring that we are effectively addressing the various drivers of migration in countries of origin, transit and often in countries of initial destination.

Lastly, we must increase search and rescue operations, capacity, resources and cooperation, both at border hotspots and at sea, which is vital for

saving lives. Simultaneously, migration and asylum mechanisms must be effective in managing cases once rescue operations are completed.

Allow me to conclude by recalling that the dire situation of migrants and refugees requires urgent and coordinated efforts. To that end, the IOM is committed to continuing to support States and to working closely with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other partners to ensure lasting solutions for the forcibly displaced, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

**The President:** I thank Mr. Liljert for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

**Mr. Nebenzia** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank the representatives of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in New York and the International Organization for Migration for their assessments of the situation of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers who attempt to cross the Mediterranean Sea in search of refuge.

We requested today's meeting after reading the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 2652 (2022) covering the period from August 2022 to July 2023 (S/2023/640). According to the report, 3,111 people have died in the Mediterranean Sea while trying to reach European shores. This year, there was a 77 per cent increase in the number of deaths at sea compared to the previous period. In fact, the number of victims has doubled in a year, and the overall number of dead or missing at sea over the past six years is in excess of 23,000 — migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers, including women and children, whose protection is expressly provided for under international law. What we see here is a very sordid picture.

We would like to state that, year in year out, the Mediterranean Sea remains the most dangerous migration route, with the highest mortality rate, and is becoming a death trap for many desperate people. This year alone, we witnessed horrific tragedies off the coast of Greece on 14 June, when 78 people died and approximately 750 people went missing, and off the coast of Italy on 28 February, when 81 migrants, including 33 children, died.

Clearly, the mechanism provided for by resolution 2240 (2015) and subsequent Security Council resolutions is not working, or, at the very least,



is extremely ineffective. It is therefore legitimate to ask why we need this resolution, if the European Union is incapable of properly carrying out the functions set out in the resolution, which were assigned to it at its own request.

It is obvious that those tragedies would not have happened had timely assistance been extended to those in distress at sea, as required by both international law and mere humanity. However, in most cases, rescuing drowning people is not a priority. Furthermore, it is often the case that European Union member States not only do not take measures to rescue the vessel, but actually forbid other vessels to come to the rescue of those in distress. Those who all the same dare to do so face criminal prosecution and can be accused of human trafficking. Furthermore, and as we can see in the Secretary-General's report, some European Union vessels intentionally try to push back vessels in distress out of their jurisdiction, condemning people to an agonizing death. In other words, everything is being done, as Mr. Borrell Fontelles said, to protect one's own blooming garden from the guests from the jungle.

We would like to put a direct question to our European colleagues: are they generally conducting investigations of cases in which assistance was not provided by the European border services to migrants in distress, and are they prepared to share that information with other Council members? Despite the assurances provided by European colleagues, it is obvious that the activities conducted by European bodies that use the mandate of resolution 2240 (2015) on combating the smuggling of migrants and trafficking in human beings are not yielding tangible results in terms of suppressing smuggling. According to the report, most of the criminals avoid arrest, including through corruption. Such criminal activity continues to flourish.

The next question that arises is what measures are being undertaken by European Union countries to rescue people at sea as part of Operation Irini. I ask because, according to the report, the vast majority of migrants and refugees at sea were rescued or intercepted by other forces and structures about which nothing is known. I would like to recall here that conducting operations involving the use of force on the high seas is authorized by the relevant Security Council resolution, and Council members should receive comprehensive and exhaustive information about the results. The Secretary-General's report does not provide any such information. At the same time, it would seem that

European Union authorities interpret resolution 2240 (2015) solely as an "indulgence" permitting the harsh suppression of illegal migratory flows.

Moreover, as we can see from the recently announced plan of the European Union, there are plans to reinforce and expand the scope of the so-called maritime operations in the Mediterranean, which journalists and human rights advocates have already labelled a naval blockade. We are left with the impression that the European Union is waging an undeclared war on migrants, who are dying because no safe alternative routes exist. How does that correlate with resolution 2240 (2015)?

Even those few migrants and refugees who are fortunate enough to reach European shores safely face harsh and inhumane treatment, detention and deportation, regardless of their circumstances or status. Let us recall here that extending assistance to migrants, refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless persons today is an important component of efforts aimed at maintaining peace, security and stability. Member States should adhere firmly to their international obligations regarding refugees, internally displaced persons and stateless persons under the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol thereto.

Moreover, the mass exodus of people from the Near East and North Africa region to Europe is a consequence of the irresponsible and thoughtless intervention of Western countries, including the European Union, in the internal affairs of sovereign States in order to destabilize them and remove undesirable Governments by force. Those countries bear the primary responsibility for such consequences.

However, the European Union is thus far essentially dealing only with migration issues in relation to Ukrainians. Citizens from the countries of North Africa and the Near East obviously cannot count on a similar level of solidarity, or indeed humane treatment in general, from Europeans. It is time for Brussels to stop blaming smugglers for people's deaths and to shoulder its responsibility rather than limiting itself to paying lip service to the tragedy of the lives lost among yet another group of migrants and refugees.

**Mr. Afonso** (Mozambique): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council, namely Gabon, Ghana and Mozambique (A3).

The A3 wishes to thank Ms. Ruven Menikdiwela, Director of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in New York, and Mr. Pär Liljert, Director of the International Organization for Migration Office to the United Nations, for their briefings.

The A3 is deeply concerned about the continued escalation of the migrant crisis in the Mediterranean Sea. The number of deaths is estimated to be above 2,300 during the reporting period, making the central Mediterranean the deadliest route for refugees and migrants. We express our deepest condolences to all the families of migrants who have perished on that journey.

This is a tragic reality that demands urgent and comprehensive action. The international community should give high priority to assistance, search-and-rescue efforts, protection and humanitarian support for people crossing the Mediterranean Sea. In that regard, the A3 urges all parties to ensure that all rescued migrants be assigned a safe port of disembarkation and be treated equally with humanity and dignity, and that their rights be fully respected, regardless of their origin, religion, age or status in accordance with international law, international human rights law and international refugee law.

In parallel, it is crucial to address the root causes that lead men, women and children to decide to make the deadly journey to cross the sea. It is imperative that we redouble our joint efforts in addressing conflict, terrorism, poverty and climate change, which are some of the factors leading to the worrisome scenario that we are witnessing today.

The flux of migrants through Libya towards Europe has led to the creation and sustenance of well-established smuggling and trafficking networks in Libya, in flagrant violation of international law and international human rights law. We therefore underscore the need to renew our commitment to the implementation of global instruments such as the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees. Those instruments remain essential in improving migration governance in a manner that would help to end impunity for human traffickers and migrant smugglers. Those instruments are also crucial for enhancing access to protection, assistance and justice for survivors. What is required is for Member States to make good on their commitment to implementing the provisions of those forward-looking instruments.

Equally important is the need to strengthen cooperation around regional initiatives such as the African Union (AU) Migration Policy Framework for Africa. The provision of technical assistance, capacity-building and funding to support the implementation of such regional instruments is essential. We note the United Nations-AU-European Union task force on migration and underscore the need to intensify work on that framework.

In that regard, the A3 notes with appreciation that the ongoing close cooperation with other countries and agencies led to the recent arrest and extradition of two key suspects of crimes against migrants and refugees from Ethiopia to the Kingdom of the Netherlands and Italy, respectively. We take this opportunity to thank the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation and INTERPOL, among others, for their support.

The A3 continues to urge the Libyan authorities, with the support of the international community, to work effectively to improve the plight of migrants and refugees in Libya. We strongly condemn the massive arbitrary detention of asylum-seekers and refugees in cruel and inhumane conditions. We therefore call on the national authorities to ensure that migrants are protected against any human rights violation, including trafficking, torture, sexual and gender-based violence or extortion. We echo the Secretary-General's call for alternatives to detention to manage migration in line with international law.

We would like to call for a renewed commitment and sense of urgency from the Libyan authorities, with the support of the Council and the international community at large, for the stabilization of Libya as soon as possible. It is our firm belief that Libya's stabilization would allow for it to strengthen control over its territory, dismantle smuggling and human trafficking networks and alleviate the migrant crisis in the Mediterranean Sea.

**Mr. Dai Bing (China)** (*spoke in Chinese*): I listened very carefully to the briefings by Ms. Menikdiwela and Mr. Liljert.

Recently, the eastern region of Libya was devastated by a severe storm that resulted in heavy casualties and extensive property damage. China was among the first to send emergency humanitarian assistance to the country. The Red Cross Society of China provided

emergency cash assistance to the Libyan Red Crescent Society. Ninety tons of humanitarian and disaster-relief supplies from China have arrived in Libya. China stands ready, along with the international community, to extend a helping hand to the Libyan people in order to help them overcome the disaster and rebuild their homes as soon as possible.

The issue pertaining to refugees and migrants along the coast of Libya has been going on for several years. The situation remains grave. The convening of this meeting, on Russia's initiative, will help the international community to conduct an in-depth study of the problem so as to seek a solution that addresses both the symptoms and the root causes.

I would like to emphasize three points.

First, China supports the Security Council's authorization to combat the smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons on the high seas off the coast of Libya. We note that the Secretary-General states in his report (S/2023/640) that the practice of such maritime operations threatened basic human rights and endangered the lives of refugees and migrants. I wish to point out that some European countries have always blamed others under the banner of protecting human rights. And yet, when it comes to protecting refugees and migrants, they have shirked their responsibilities. They have remained indifferent to, or even participated in, several serious human rights violations. We urge the countries concerned to abide by the norms of international law and effectively protect the human rights and fundamental rights of refugees and migrants. We urge the countries concerned to address the issue of refugees and migrants with an open and tolerant mindset, rather than allowing tragedies to unfold time and again.

Secondly, the causes giving rise to illegal immigration on the high seas off the coast of Libya are complex. They are closely related to the problems of extreme poverty, social unrest and armed conflict in the neighbourhood. Who would be willing to drift from place to place, enduring hardships and embarking on perilous journeys if their homes were not destroyed and their very survival difficult to ensure? We hope that the relevant parties will realize that, instead of interception at sea or removal on shore, a better approach would be to take proactive measures to host the refugees and migrants locally. European countries should effectively deliver on their official development assistance commitments, help the countries of origin of those refugees and migrants develop their economies

and improve people's general well-being so as to completely eradicate the underlying causes of refugees and migrants and, ultimately, create conditions for the refugees and migrants to return home.

Thirdly, the long-standing instability in Libya has created a fertile breeding ground for illegal migration. The international community should adhere to the Libyan-led and -owned principle and provide constructive support for Libya's political transition, development and reconstruction so as to promote an early restoration of long-term peace and stability in the country. There are currently 700,000 refugees and migrants from more than 40 countries in Libya. Their presence exacerbates the humanitarian crisis there. The international community should fully take into account the genuine difficulties faced by Libya, intensify its humanitarian assistance and provide constructive support to Libya in order to improve the management of refugees and migrants.

**Mr. Wood** (United States of America): I would like to thank the directors of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) for their briefings and for the work they and their teams do every day to protect migrants. Their commitment is noted, and we appreciate the role of the IOM and the High Commissioner for Refugees to ensure migrants and refugees are treated in accordance with international law.

The United States remains deeply concerned about migrant smuggling and human trafficking in Libya and around the globe. Europe and the United States share many challenges related to irregular migration. We both share responsibilities for managing migration on our respective borders and a commitment to promote safe, orderly, humane and regular migration. We believe prioritizing both access to international protection and humane border management measures are essential to address forced displacement and the challenges of irregular migration. We also look to regional, multilateral approaches to migration. We thank the European Union (EU) for its commitment, through the EU Naval Force Mediterranean Operation IRINI to rescuing refugees and migrants on the high seas off Libya's coast when there are reasonable grounds to suspect the vessels are being used for migrant smuggling and human trafficking.

Smugglers routinely subject those they are transporting to sexual violence, extortion and beatings. They are transported in horrific conditions and, as



the Secretary-General's latest report (S/2023/640) notes, tactics by smugglers remain largely unchanged. Operation IRINI is a key component of international efforts to alleviate the human tragedy of migrant deaths on the high seas. The people dying in the Mediterranean are often fleeing violence or extreme hardships in their own countries, only to be exploited by human traffickers and smugglers en route before finally losing their lives at sea. Migrants returning to Libya often face human rights abuses. Nearly half of the migrants and refugees in Libya are from sub-Saharan Africa, according to the latest Secretary-General's report, which also notes an increasing number of migrant expulsions to neighbouring countries. We want to commend the attention the EU has given to ensuring Operation IRINI places a primary focus on the human rights of the migrants themselves.

This challenge is bigger than just Operation IRINI. The international community can do more to help vulnerable migrants by supporting the Secretary-General's call for a holistic approach to address the root causes of irregular migration. We want to thank the members of the Council for their engagement on a resolution to extend Operation IRINI for another 12 months. We particularly appreciate the efforts of the penholders, Malta and France, in incorporating strong human rights language that stays within the scope of the resolution. We hope for Council consensus to renew this important part of our larger effort in the coming days.

**Mr. Montalvo Sosa** (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank Ms. Ruven Menikdiwela, Director of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in New York, and Mr. Pär Liljert, Director of the International Organization for Migration Office to the United Nations, for their briefings today.

Global migratory flows and the situation of security and human rights facing migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in all regions of the world is a growing concern, especially with regard to those who are made more vulnerable by conflict situations.

Ecuador has a long tradition of international humanitarian protection that has made us a regional and worldwide reference. We are one of the countries in Latin America with the highest number of requests for refugee status. To date, we have registered hundreds of thousands of people who need international protection from some 88 nationalities, of which more than 75,000 were recognized as refugees.

Ecuador is a country that has experienced all facets of the migratory phenomenon, be it country of origin, destination, transit, return and refugee. As such, we have undertaken great efforts to promote safe, orderly, regular and responsible migration that guarantee the duties and rights of persons who are in a situation of human mobility, as well as to combat human trafficking and illegal migrant smuggling networks. The Secretary-General's report (S/2023/640), on the implementation of resolution 2652 (2022), details the proliferation of illicit trafficking of migrants in the Mediterranean Sea. Risky migration, through various routes, is a danger that exposes people to sexual violence, torture, trafficking, slavery and other conditions of exploitation — both during transit and at the destination. The loss of life, crimes committed against migrants and refugees and forcible returns must end. International cooperation should be intensified so that human traffickers and migrant smugglers are held accountable and brought to justice. Migrants, including asylum-seekers, must be treated with humanity and dignity, and their rights fully respected. It is the responsibility of States to fulfil their obligations under international law, including international human rights norms and international refugee law. It will be important to step up search-and-rescue efforts and to put in place effective disembarkation mechanisms on risky maritime routes through the coordinated efforts of States of origin, transit and destination.

We agree with the Secretary-General about the need to take a holistic approach to addressing the root causes of migration, through greater cooperation and solidarity, while prioritizing human rights and the dignity of migrants. We call for the entire United Nations system to take a thorough approach to addressing the issue. Where the Security Council is concerned, it should focus on situations that could pose a threat to international peace and security.

**Mrs. Frazier** (Malta): I thank the Director of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Office in New York and the Director of the International Organization for Migration Office to the United Nations for their briefings.

Before speaking about my own region, I should recall that several countries in Africa are facing a considerably more difficult situation, despite bravely carrying the burden of significant migratory pressures. With regard to my region, the Mediterranean continues to be a perilous migratory route. Malta

remains committed to saving lives and to the effective management of mass migration in a manner that fully respects international law. We remain concerned about the continued precarious journeys of refugees, asylum-seekers and other migrants. They often lead to suffering and abuse, and many migrants never make it.

Those journeys, from countries of origin through countries of transit and to countries of destination, are most often facilitated by human traffickers and smugglers, criminals who exploit vulnerable people for illicit gains. That is why resolution 2240 (2015) is focused on decapitating the networks of human traffickers and smugglers. The links between transnational organized crime and terrorism also deserve our full attention. The Council's adoption of resolution 2240 (2015) and its subsequent renewals reaffirm its determination to combat the smuggling of migrants and trafficking of persons off the coast of Libya. It is also a clear sign of the Council's willingness to address the situation in the Mediterranean, which is the last stop for migrants on a long and arduous route, with many perishing along the way. The resolution's renewal will enable us to continue tackling the networks of human traffickers and smugglers in a manner that safeguards human rights.

In that context, we would like to highlight the contribution made by European Union Naval Force Mediterranean Operation IRINI in supporting the detection and monitoring of human smuggling and trafficking networks in its area of operation and in saving lives every year. We stress that the ongoing fight against migrant smuggling and human trafficking must be carried out in a manner consistent with our obligations under international law. The human rights and fundamental freedoms of all must not be infringed on. Malta, along with the European Union and its member States, remains committed to saving lives and to responding to displacement crises around the world through both humanitarian and development efforts. Collectively, we continue to provide access to international protection for people fleeing war, conflict and persecution in other parts of the world.

We continue to believe that the Council has a role to play in addressing the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement. That requires an integrated and comprehensive approach that must involve countries of origin, transit and destination. It must also encompass conflict resolution and prevention, humanitarian aid, development cooperation, climate action and long-term sustainable solutions. At the same time, States

should work to counter human trafficking and migrant smuggling in full respect for human rights. Malta supports the provision of capacity-building measures to that effect, especially because they are fundamental to preventing more lives from being endangered.

In closing, we reaffirm that establishing effective partnerships based on the principles of solidarity and shared responsibility is crucial to managing migratory and refugee flows. We must also support countries on the front lines and provide durable solutions that safeguard the dignity, safety and human rights of all.

**Mr. Hauri** (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Director of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Office in New York, Ms. Ruven Menikdiwela, and the Director of the International Organization for Migration Office to the United Nations, Mr. Pär Liljert, for their informative briefings.

Thousands of people die every year in the Mediterranean. The estimate of the Missing Migrants Project of the International Organization for Migration for that region is that 28,105 migrants have gone missing since 2014. We know that there are many more who are not included in that total. Those are not just numbers. They are individual fates. Switzerland is deeply concerned about the situation and would like to express its sincere condolences to the families of the victims, who remain without news of their loved ones more often than not.

Migration flows are a common concern for countries of origin, transit and destination. Governments on every continent therefore have a shared interest and a moral duty and obligation to take action. That is why it is essential for States to work together and strengthen the protection of the vulnerable people along migration routes. We would like to make three points in that regard.

First, we must combat the trafficking and exploitation of migrants. To that end, improving the protection of migrants, especially those in distress, is crucial. That means strengthening respect for their human rights. Switzerland is working to ensure the protection and sustainable integration of refugees, displaced persons and migrants in the first areas that migrants reach and along migration routes. When refugees and migrants do not find adequate support in the first country they reach, they are often forced to continue their journey to other regions or countries, often in perilous conditions. They risk becoming victims of human trafficking or other human rights violations or having to use the services of smugglers. It is imperative to put an end to that dangerous dynamic.

Secondly, we must address the root causes of forced displacement. The continuing increase in forced displacement is a result of armed conflict as well as the consequences of climate change. In that respect, the Security Council must strengthen its commitment to crisis prevention and to the protection of civilian populations affected by armed conflict and its consequences. That includes a sustained commitment by the Council to ensuring strict compliance with international humanitarian law, international refugee law and human rights law.

Thirdly, we need strong partnerships in order to be able to tackle those issues effectively. Only a multilateral system adapted to today's challenges can address the problem on a global scale. That is why Switzerland is working with other countries, in particular within the context of the Rabat Process. We also maintain other partnerships, such as the Global Alliance for Missing Persons, established in collaboration with the International Committee of the Red Cross, which seeks to improve the prevention and resolution of cases of separation and disappearance. Through those efforts, Switzerland is committed to improving the search for missing persons and restoring family ties.

The Global Refugee Forum to be held in Geneva in December represents an excellent opportunity to announce new multi-stakeholder commitments and exchange best practices, as well as inspire greater burden and responsibility sharing. Let us use this key moment to advance refugee protection, while continuing to address the root causes of forced displacement by working, as a Security Council, for international peace and security.

**Mr. De Rivière** (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the representatives of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration Office to the United Nations for their statements.

I would like to highlight three points.

First, Europe is a land of welcome and asylum. France has always distinguished itself through its policy of welcoming forcibly displaced populations. France currently hosts almost 700,000 refugees and asylum seekers, making it the third largest host country in the European Union. Those refugees include Ukrainians who have fled Russia's war of aggression. The conflict has resulted in the forced displacement of more than

11 million people, including almost 6.3 million refugees. More than 4 million are being hosted by countries of the European Union. I think it is important to remember that at this table.

France contributes approximately €93 million to the UNHCR budget, and the European Union and its member States contribute approximately €1.5 billion. That represents 50 times and 750 times, respectively, the amount of the contribution of the Russian Federation, which does not respond to humanitarian crises.

Secondly, we have a collective duty to protect migrants. In the Mediterranean, France is committed to combating human trafficking and smuggling from Libya, in which the absence of a unified State encourages networks of smugglers, traffickers and militias. That is why France is committed to supporting the establishment of a stable, unified Libyan State, as it is the only way to put an end to trafficking. The sanctions regime established by the Security Council makes it possible to target the traffickers. We must do all we can to facilitate cooperation among States on migration issues and prevent the tragedies that continue to occur in the Mediterranean.

Thirdly and in conclusion, we must address the root causes of the displacement of populations. Insecurity and human rights violations during conflicts are among the primary causes of displacement. To prevent those violations, all members of the Security Council must assume their responsibilities. We cannot block humanitarian assistance to Syria and then deplore the consequences of the humanitarian crisis in that country. The presence of the Wagner Group in the Sahel contributes to the instability of the region, which fuels terrorism and leads to the displacement of persons.

Mass migration is caused by conflict, violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, poverty and environmental and climate conditions. We must invest in all areas of sustainable development: education, women's rights, climate, the protection of biodiversity and health. That is the purpose of the partnership between the European Union and the African Union. At least €8 billion will be earmarked to that end for the period from 2021 to 2027.

France is doing its utmost to ensure that no one is left behind. It recently became the fourth largest donor globally of official development assistance in 2022, with a total of €15.1 billion.

**Mr. Phipps** (United Kingdom): Let me begin by thanking Directors Menikdiwela and Liljert for their briefings today. The United Kingdom would also like to thank France and Malta for their efforts in drafting the renewal of United Nations resolution 2652 (2022), which we fully support.

As we are all aware, Libya is a complex operating environment for tackling migration and human smuggling. All refugees and migrants, regardless of their migration status, should be treated with the humanity and dignity that they deserve.

The United Kingdom continues to be deeply concerned about abuses of migrants and refugees in Libya. We continue to call on the Libyan authorities to take steps to end the exploitation and abuse of migrants and refugees, working towards the closure of all detention centres. A more holistic approach is needed to tackle the drivers of migration across Africa and the Western Mediterranean route, and we are committed to working closely with Member States and the United Nations to achieve that. We take note of the recommendations by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration today.

The United Kingdom also continues to urge the Libyan authorities to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and implement a functioning migration system that respects migrants' and refugees' human rights.

Unfortunately, these challenges will sadly endure in Libya in the absence of a political solution, which is why driving forward the process is front and centre of our work. We continue to support Special Representative of the Secretary-General Bathily and the work he is doing to reach an inclusive political agreement, as well as the wider efforts of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) to support peace and stability in Libya.

Before concluding, let me also note that we hope the Russian delegation will give equal focus to language on human rights and international law when the Council discusses UNSMIL's mandate next month.

**Ms. Shaheen** (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the briefers for their briefings on the situation of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

Today, we are discussing an important issue. The world faces many interconnected challenges, foremost of which are conflicts, climate change and food insecurity.

That compels and exacerbates the displacement and migration of millions of people, amounting to more than 110 million displaced people worldwide, half of whom are displaced owing to conflicts. Many of them face additional risks while seeking refuge and safety, especially women and children, who are subjected to sexual and gender-based violence. In that regard, we stress the need to provide protection to refugees and displaced people, respect their rights and provide them with basic services.

We are concerned in particular about the situation in the Mediterranean. Reports of the Secretary-General indicate that the number of dead and missing persons trying to cross to Europe between August 2022 and June 2023 was 77 per cent higher than the same period in the previous year. That trend demands the international community's attention. In that connection, we support the renewal of the Security Council's mandate to Member States and regional organizations to combat networks of migrant smuggling and human trafficking off the coast of Libya. That is an important mechanism, but the international community must do more in that regard.

We reiterate that improving our international response to this phenomenon requires a common international approach that focuses on addressing the causes of irregular migration and forced displacement, not only on addressing their ongoing impacts. That also requires promoting development, stability and prosperity in communities across all stages of peace operations.

Moreover, it is important in post-conflict situations to create an environment conducive to the voluntary and safe return of refugees and displaced persons to their communities. That can be done through early recovery and reconstruction projects which will help refugees to live a normal life after returning to their homes.

The international community must work collectively to support countries' efforts to address irregular migration and its root causes while respecting their sovereignty. We need to enhance current national cooperation mechanisms among countries of origin, transit and destination while supporting relevant regional and international agencies and initiatives. We must also enhance the capacity of countries of transit to address irregular migration, human trafficking and relevant transnational organized crime. As we have previously mentioned in the context of strengthening collective efforts to address the challenges related to



displacement, the United Arab Emirates announced at the International Conference on Migration and Development, held in Rome, that it would contribute \$100 million in support of development projects in countries affected by irregular migration, including by supporting the initiatives proposed in Rome.

We must acknowledge that climate-induced migration is expected to rise significantly in the coming decades, with forecasts by the Institute for Economics and Peace estimating that by 2050, more than 1 billion people could be displaced worldwide as a result of climate change and natural disasters. Extreme weather phenomena result in consequences such as rising sea levels, food and water insecurity and fierce competition for resources, compelling millions of people to leave their countries. In order to prevent and address climate-induced displacement, we must urgently invest in promoting the capacity of communities for resilience and adaptation. It is therefore critical to focus on the nexus between climate change and conflicts and on how to support fragile and conflict-affected States, as well as those States that will be affected by climate-induced migration and displacement.

Finally, I would like to reaffirm that the United Arab Emirates will continue to work with all relevant stakeholders to meet the needs of migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers and to strengthen prevention and protection mechanisms.

**Mrs. Shino** (Japan): I thank Director Menikdiwela and Director Liljert for their briefings.

With regard to the draft resolution that will renew the authorization set forth in resolution 2240 (2015), Japan supports the co-penholders' efforts to seek a constructive compromise among Security Council members.

It is shocking that more than 3,000 persons died or went missing in the Mediterranean Sea between August 2022 and June 2023. Japan expresses its deepest condolences to their families. Such tragic and unacceptable loss of life must end. It is also reported that almost 170,000 people arrived in Europe between September 2022 and July 2023. While many of them departed from Libya and Tunisia, we should not consider that flow of people as merely a local issue in North Africa. International and regional collective efforts are required to solve the problem. Japan welcomes Member States' continuous efforts to rescue migrants, intercept boats and prevent and combat the smuggling and trafficking of persons off the coast of Libya.

Japan echoes the Secretary-General's call for a holistic approach to address the root causes of irregular migration, which is needed more than ever. The Panel of Experts of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1970 (2011) concerning Libya reports that it has identified eight human trafficking and migrant smuggling routes in Libya, with elements in 17 Member States, including African, Asian and European countries. The international community must show solidarity to tackle the problems in the migrants' countries of origin.

The human rights of refugees and migrants must be upheld. We are concerned about the reports of violence, including sexual violence, and abuse perpetrated against detained refugees and migrants, as well as of their arbitrary detention. Japan calls on Libyan actors to fully respect human rights and welcomes the efforts of the United Nations and regional organizations to support Libya in that regard.

I would like to conclude my statement by reiterating Japan's commitment to actively participating in the international efforts to end the tragedy.

**Mr. Moretti** (Brazil): I join others in thanking Directors Menikdiwela and Liljert for their briefings.

The coercive measures exceptionally authorized by the Security Council under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, through resolution 2240 (2015), have been justified as necessary to combat the smuggling of migrants and trafficking of persons in the Mediterranean Sea off the Libyan coast, since they undermine the process of stabilization of Libya and endanger the lives of thousands of people. Those measures do not — and should not be taken to — criminalize migration. They must be implemented in a manner that is fully consistent with international humanitarian law, international human rights law and international refugee law for the benefit of all migrants and refugees who cross the Mediterranean Sea. We echo the recommendations made by the Secretary-General in his report (S/2023/640) on the implementation of resolution 2652 (2022), which extends the Council's authorization to intercept vessels off the Libyan coast until 29 September. All actors involved must place human rights and the immediate needs of migrants and refugees at the core of their efforts to prevent and counter smuggling and trafficking. The issue should not be politicized and taken out of its already terrible context.

As the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants has pointed out, States must ensure that border governance measures do not run against the prohibition of collective expulsions. They also must respect the principle of equality and non-discrimination, the principle of non-refoulement, the right to seek asylum, the right to life, the prohibition of torture, the promotion of gender equality, and the rights and best interests of children. Those measures must also comply with Member States' search-and-rescue obligations under international maritime law.

The coercive measures authorized by the Council under resolution 2240 (2015) have been in place for eight years. Yet, the situation today is unfortunately worse than ever. Without peace and sustainable development, migration flows will continue to increase. We will continue to witness death and suffering, including among children and other vulnerable persons. Brazil concurs with the Secretary-General's assessment of the need for a holistic approach to address the root causes of irregular migration, through enhanced cooperation and solidarity. In that regard, we underscore the importance of effectively implementing the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. We also hope that the upcoming second Global Refugee Forum will foster ambitious commitments to improving the situation of those fleeing persecution. We must not allow for the horror that we have seen in the Mediterranean Sea to continue any further.

**The President:** I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Albania.

Albania shares the concerns expressed by others—including our briefers, whom we thank—about the large number of irregular migrants from Africa, who seek to reach the Mediterranean coast through smuggling routes and other illicit means. We deplore the illegal migration that puts at risk the lives of innocent people. We stand for the fair and humane treatment

of all migrants. Despite their unsustainability, those migrant flows are leading to tragedies, with a very high cost for everyone. The death toll is unacceptable, and sustainable solutions must be sought and found. The European Union's Naval Force Mediterranean Operation IRINI has been doing remarkable work to save lives in danger, and we look forward to the renewal of its mandate.

In our view, preventive measures are key to disrupting criminal networks from gaining the upper hand. In that vein, it is crucial to strengthen dialogue among the migrants' countries of origin, transit and destination in order to seek long-standing solutions to the massive interregional and Mediterranean flows. An efficient preventive system should focus on continued and strengthened efforts, including through close coordination among countries, to deal with the root causes of migration, such as poverty, food insecurity, climate change and underdevelopment, as well as terrorism and conflict. It should enhance collaboration among countries in combating human traffickers and strengthening border management, promote concrete and implementable alternative options to migration, such as job creation and sustainable development, and support all instruments that foster legal migration for those who are genuinely and legally entitled to it. We should bear in mind that the safety and dignity of human lives must be protected at all costs. We reaffirm our commitment to contributing in any way we can to peace and stability everywhere, in order to tackle the deep roots of instability, the lack of perspective and terrorism, as well as climate change and its consequences, as factors that fuel irregular migration.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

*The meeting rose at 4.20 p.m.*