



# Security Council

Seventy-ninth year

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Monday, 30 September 2024, 3 p.m.

New York

*Provisional*

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*President:* Mr. Žbogar. . . . . (Slovenia)

*Members:*

Algeria . . . . .	Mr. Koudri
China . . . . .	Mr. Dai Bing
Ecuador . . . . .	Mr. Montalvo Sosa
France . . . . .	Mrs. Jaraud-Darnault
Guyana . . . . .	Ms. Benn
Japan . . . . .	Mr. Iriya
Malta . . . . .	Mrs. Frazier
Mozambique . . . . .	Mr. Fernandes
Republic of Korea . . . . .	Mr. Hwang
Russian Federation. . . . .	Mr. Polyanskiy/Ms. Zabolotskaya
Sierra Leone . . . . .	Mr. Kanu
Switzerland . . . . .	Mrs. Chanda
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Eckersely
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 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: Mr. Sivanka Dhanapala, 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 in New York.

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

I give the floor to Mr. Dhanapala.

**Mr. Dhanapala:** I would like to express the appreciation of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for this opportunity to brief Security Council members 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 protection and 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.

Since last year's briefing (see S/PV.9465), the number of people crossing the Mediterranean from North Africa has decreased significantly. However, there has not been an improvement in access to protection along the key routes for refugees and asylum-seekers. Instead, we have seen a further increase in challenges relating to access to territory and asylum, evidenced by an increase in interceptions and collective expulsions and continued arbitrary arrest and detention. Those risks are compounded by the multiple dangers associated with movements along land routes in Africa towards the Mediterranean. A joint report by UNHCR, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Mixed Migration Centre released this year noted the high risks of deaths, gender-based violence, kidnapping for ransom, trafficking, robbery and other physical violence faced by people moving. A

second UNHCR report highlighted the major gaps in access to protection and humanitarian assistance along the routes.

UNHCR is working with partners to implement a route-based approach aimed at enhancing access to protection along key routes. That approach represents a shift towards more humane but also effective State responses to deliver better outcomes for people on the move, affected communities and States and create alternatives to dangerous journeys, including through strengthening asylum systems, early identification and referral of refugees, as well as migrants, including those with specific needs. It also includes strengthening access to services, as well as economic opportunities and increasing safe, orderly and regular pathways.

It is important to highlight that the challenges do not start in North Africa. A holistic, cross-regional response that starts at the root of the journeys is required. Unfortunately, I am telling Council members nothing new when I point at the deteriorating protection situation in countries such as the Sudan and Mali, spilling over into countries in North Africa, such as Egypt but also Libya, as well as Mauritania. UNHCR has registered more than 350,000 refugees and asylum-seekers so far this year, many of them Sudanese refugees, seeking protection in North Africa.

Between January and August, it is estimated that more than 134,000 refugees and migrants departed by sea from North and West Africa towards Europe, reflecting a 24 per cent decrease compared to 2023. While arrivals to Italy decreased, the number of people disembarked in North African countries slightly increased, with nearly 33,000 people disembarked in Tunisia and more than 14,000 in Libya. According to the IOM Missing Migrants Project, as of 17 September, some 1,450 persons were accounted as dead or missing in the Mediterranean. That number represents a 44 per cent decrease, compared with 2,609 people for the same period in 2023.

Other sea routes remain in use, including of refugees moving onwards from Lebanon. Predictable search and rescue capacity, followed by disembarkation in a place of safety, remains a critical need in the Mediterranean.

In Libya, as of 15 September, more than 97,000 Sudanese refugees are estimated to have arrived since April 2023. Authorities estimate that approximately 65,000 Sudanese arrived through Kufrah, in the south-east, alone, with 300 to 400 new arrivals per day. A total of 45,450 Sudanese are registered with UNHCR in Libya,

of whom 26,219 were registered by UNHCR after the conflict started. With the recent escalation of conflict in the Sudan, more Sudanese refugees are expected to arrive in Libya. Additional support is urgently needed, including for local communities, throughout the country, as Sudanese refugees continue to arrive and move onwards towards urban centres in the country.

At the same time, many of the challenges reported last year remain, including inconsistent access to detention centres and very limited possibility of securing the release of people in need of international protection, the lack of access to disembarkation points controlled by some entities involved in interceptions at sea and restrictions impacting the nationalities UNHCR is able to register — challenges that continue to affect the protection UNHCR is able to provide. Conditions in detention centres remain of grave concern, and UNHCR continues to note that Libya is not a place of safety for the purposes of disembarkation following rescue at sea.

In Tunisia, certain case processing modalities have been suspended. Many of those arriving in the country are extremely vulnerable, including refugees fleeing the conflicts in the Sudan and the Sahel. UNHCR is advocating the introduction of interim measures to ensure timely identification and assistance, while continuing to engage with national authorities to find ways of ensuring access to international protection.

UNHCR is committed to assisting, with partners and authorities of all States along the route, in addressing challenges related to mixed movements of refugees and migrants arriving at land, air and sea borders, including developing the legal architecture required to ensure States can honour their international legal obligations towards the protection of refugees.

Addressing those challenges requires a significant shift in modalities to ensure a more holistic response to mixed movements, as outlined by the route-based approach. That includes a recognition of the importance of the right to seek asylum at borders without being turned away or violently pushed back. Individuals should not be prevented from seeking protection under international human rights law and international refugee law. The route-based approach also calls for establishing proper legal and substantive migration pathways to keep economies and social systems going and for providing proper entry points for migrants as well as complementary pathways for refugees.

UNHCR has six urgent recommendations. They are not new but, in the light of the limited progress on them, they need to be renewed.

The first is human rights safeguards. Any cooperation or assistance provided by States to other States along key routes for border management purposes should ensure that basic human rights and rights relating to the protection of refugees and migrants are upheld.

The second is strengthening access to State-based protection. Several states in North Africa have expressed their intention to develop their own national asylum legislation and systems. UNHCR stands ready to support Governments with capacity development, technical advice and equipment and expertise, as needed, to ensure that refugees can access international protection where they are.

The third is increased search and rescue at sea. We reiterate our call for renewed and joint efforts to enhance search-and-rescue capacity and implement effective and predictable disembarkation mechanisms in the central Mediterranean Sea. Saving lives at sea and providing humanitarian assistance is one of the most basic obligations of humanity, and those performing rescue operations or helping in good faith should not be penalized for doing so. Delays in rescuing boats while questioning the basic notion of distress at sea can have fatal consequences. States and commercial ships should renew efforts to accelerate rescue efforts in the light of frequent shipwrecks claiming new lives.

The fourth is the prosecution of smugglers and traffickers and the protection of victims. All States must renew efforts to cooperate on a route-based approach to effectively investigate and prosecute smuggling and trafficking and those enabling those crimes to be committed on such a scale, while taking steps to enhance the protection available to victims of violence by smugglers and traffickers.

The fifth is inclusion, resettlement and complementary pathways. UNHCR urges all States to strengthen investments in development and inclusion in countries of asylum and transit, to remove barriers in accessing family reunification and to expand resettlement quotas for refugees in countries along key routes, including in North Africa. Additional efforts to expand access to other pathways for refugees and migrants continue to be needed too.

And the final one is addressing root causes. I cannot emphasize enough how urgent it is to address the main drivers of these movements, which include conflict, political instability, poverty and climate change. Since the previous briefing on this subject, the situation in many countries of origin or asylum has further deteriorated, including in the Sudan and the Sahel. With the recent escalation of the conflict in the Middle East, there is potential for an increase in onward movement also from countries there.

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

I now give the floor to Mr. Liljert.

**Mr. Liljert:** On behalf of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), we thank the Security Council for initiating this important discussion and granting the IOM the opportunity to address this meeting.

We must acknowledge the critical factors that drive countless individuals to leave their homes and the severe challenges migrants and refugees face navigating mixed migration routes. Those pressing issues are at the heart of today's discussion and need firm and urgent action. The Mediterranean Sea, historically a region that has witnessed significant and sustained movement of people, has been at the forefront of global attention in recent decades, infamous for the large movements of migrants and refugees who try to cross it to reach Europe and for the number who die in the process, particularly across the central Mediterranean route, now known as one of the world's deadliest migration routes.

A convergence of adverse drivers in origin and transit countries has fuelled migration from the East, the Horn and West Africa and beyond along that route. Economic opportunities remain scarce, and soaring food prices have made daily survival even more difficult. According to data from the IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) from 2023 and 2024, economic reasons — 44 per cent — war and conflict — 29 per cent — and the desire to escape from personal or targeted violence — 26 per cent — are the primary drivers for migrants leaving their country of origin. Challenges in host countries often act as drivers. The devastation caused by disaster, exacerbated by climate change, has compounded those hardships. Conflict, violence and political instability have left many with no choice but to flee. It is no wonder that,

in the absence of other viable alternatives, thousands of people decide to embark upon perilous journeys in search of a better life and safety.

Despite immense risks, migrants and refugees will continue to seek a future in Europe and other places, with Libya remaining a critical transit point. We know, for example, that the number of migrants in Libya has continued to increase slightly, a trend that began in December 2023. The increase in the number of migrants in Libya can be partially linked to the arrival of Sudanese migrants, particularly in Al-Kufra, because of the ongoing conflict in their country of origin.

Nonetheless, arrivals to Europe have decreased, according to our data from the DTM flow monitoring. Arrivals by land and sea from January through September were lower in 2024 as compared to 2023. The biggest decrease in arrivals is reported on the central Mediterranean route. That is largely due to a decrease in arrivals from Tunisia and Libya.

Migrants are pursuing even more dangerous routes to reach Europe, as is evident in the sharp increase in arrivals on the western African Atlantic route. Over half of the migrants interviewed by the IOM DTM team when they arrived in Europe experienced at least one type of abuse, violence or exploitation. The share is higher for migrants travelling along the central Mediterranean route, where 45 per cent experienced incidents of physical violence and 30 per cent were kept against their will in detention-like conditions.

IOM field teams at the Al-Kufra point of entry, between the Sudan and Libya, have reported a shift in the profile of arrivals, reporting the presence of significantly larger numbers of women and children. In turn, that is driving new forms of trafficking along the route, not least sexual exploitation and child labour. Overall, evidence collected by the IOM on the Mediterranean migration routes recently points to heightened protection risks along the central Mediterranean route and on longer journeys involving transit through multiple countries.

As mentioned by my colleague from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in 2024 the IOM's Missing Migrants Project has documented at least 1,450 deaths in the Mediterranean, out of which 1,121 lives were lost on the central Mediterranean route. While that represents

a decrease from the death toll on the route during the same period last year, the mortality rate in comparison to total attempted crossings is actually higher.

Deaths and disappearances occur at sea, but also on land. In that regard, however, the data is much more difficult to collect owing to the vast and difficult terrain. However, this year at least 152 people have perished attempting to cross the Sahara to reach Libya. The main causes of death included vehicle accidents, dehydration and harsh environmental conditions and violence.

We would like to take the opportunity today to make a concrete call for action on three fronts.

First, with regard to a sharper focus on saving lives, the international community should not allow the Sahara Desert and the Mediterranean Sea to continue becoming mass graves for migrants. The scale of this tragedy, its impact on survivors, families and communities and the frequency with which we witness deaths in transit constitute an intolerable and utterly soluble humanitarian crisis. As such, the IOM urges Governments to ensure that search-and-rescue operations be promptly activated for all situations of distress, both on land and at sea. Moreover, Libya is not considered a place of safety for purposes of disembarkation, as evidenced by the Independent Fact-Finding Mission on Libya. Those who are disembarked in Libya face various human rights violations, including detention, trafficking and a high risk of being re-smuggled.

Secondly, with regard to a holistic approach to address root causes and foster regional cooperation and solutions, we must move beyond reactive measures and develop a route-based, comprehensive and strategic approach that tackles the adverse drivers of irregular migration, including providing sustainable solutions that not only alleviate current pressures but prevent future irregular migration along dangerous routes as well as displacement. Countries and communities of origin and transit need improved services, greater access to economic opportunities, education, stability and clear alternatives to risking their lives at the hands of smugglers. Those interventions succeed only when Governments and local leadership create environments where economic development and social progress can flourish.

Community involvement is key. When communities are empowered to take part in their own recovery, through initiatives such as community-based planning,

they become the architects of their own future. Local populations, especially women, play a vital role in social cohesion, and their voices must be at the forefront of decision-making processes.

Thirdly and lastly, the IOM strongly encourages the expansion of humanitarian pathways for those who still find themselves in need of safe refuge. Those can take the form of humanitarian visas, temporary protection permits, private sponsorships, education opportunities, temporary work permits, planned relocation, family reunification and medical evacuations. Expanding legal, humane and accessible pathways for migrants is critical. It not only saves lives but also provides structured, orderly migration processes that reduce the risks associated with irregular migration.

The IOM urges the international community to take decisive action on those three critical fronts. By adopting those measures, we can not only reduce the immense human suffering associated with irregular migration but also create sustainable, long-term solutions that promote peace, stability and shared responsibility.

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 continue supporting States and working with UNHCR as well as other partners to ensure lasting solutions for those forcibly displaced, migrants and refugees.

**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. Polyanskiy** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank the representatives of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration for the information provided.

We are extremely concerned about the ongoing, worrisome situation regarding migration in the Mediterranean. As we did last year, we had to request today's meeting after we read the Secretary-General's report (S/2024/642) on the implementation of resolution 2698 (2023), covering the period August 2023 to August this year. Despite the fact that at that time we drew attention to the appalling death toll and called for urgent action to save lives, little has changed since then. The document once again proves the tragic fact that the Mediterranean Sea, particularly the central Mediterranean route, is the most dangerous migration

route with the largest number of deaths. That journey becomes a deadly trap for many desperate people. Over the past period, 1,920 people have perished or gone missing while attempting to reach the shores of the European continent, with the majority of them — 1,302 — taking the central route. Human casualties have also been reported along the eastern and western Mediterranean routes.

We observe a 42 per cent decrease in the number of casualties as compared to the previous year. However, that drop might not appear so substantial if we recall that last year the number of deaths at sea increased by as much as 77 per cent. In the past seven years, more than 24,000 people have died or gone missing at sea. They are migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, including women and children, whose protection is explicitly stipulated in international law.

It is evident that the European Union (EU) leadership is rushing to remedy the situation by concluding partnership agreements on migration management with a number of African countries over the past year. However, it will take time for those measures to produce any actual impact. They have come far too late. Thousands of lives are irretrievably lost. Terrible tragedies, such as those off the coast of Libya on 16 December 2023 and off the notorious Lampedusa island on 16 June this year, continue to occur with distressing regularity. To prevent them, it is imperative for Europe to fundamentally change its attitude towards the problem. It is obvious that the tragedies mentioned would not have happened if those in distress at sea had promptly received the necessary assistance, as required by simple humanity, let alone the principles of international law.

However, in most cases, rescuing people from drowning is not a top priority. EU member States not only fail to take action to rescue sinking vessels, but de facto ban any other ships from assisting those in distress, thereby undermining the efforts of the relevant humanitarian non-governmental organizations. In short, they are doing everything possible to prevent migrants from reaching their land, often at the cost of migrants' lives. There has yet been no proper investigation into the European border services' failure to provide assistance to migrants in distress, and the perpetrators remain unpunished. Brussels simply ignores the Secretary-General's repeated recommendations that all those rescued or intercepted at sea be assigned safe ports

of landing, again in line with international maritime law, and that crimes committed against migrants and refugees be investigated.

The situation is no better when it comes to combating migrant smuggling and human trafficking. As the report shows, most criminals avoid arrest, including through the use of corruption schemes. Such criminal activities continue to flourish. It is noteworthy that the European Union always has bombastic utterances about the fight against impunity, as well as cooperation with the International Criminal Court (ICC). However, when the Court receives a complaint against themselves, they were in no rush to bring the perpetrators to justice, and the ICC is in no hurry whatsoever to deal with European civil servants.

We have a legitimate question. Based on what I mentioned, how can we evaluate the effectiveness of the relevant EU naval operation over the past years? The answer is obvious. The mandate stipulated in resolution 2240 (2015) and subsequent iterations has not been implemented. EU structures have all along been using the mandate solely to indulge their harsh suppression of irregular migrant flows, using high-falutin words to mask their undeclared war against migrants and refugees in the Mediterranean. That has become so obvious that Brussels itself has rejected the idea of extending the mandate. Indeed, its prolongation would be an outright mockery of the thousands of migrants and refugees who have died.

We would also like to remind members that providing assistance to migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and stateless persons is today an important component of efforts to maintain peace, security and stability. In that regard, we once again strongly urge Brussels and the EU countries to live up to their own loud statements of humanism and human rights by showing a humane attitude towards all migrants and refugees without exception, not just Ukrainian ones. We urge an end to the shameful practice by vessels from coastal European States of pushing boats with migrants onboard outside of their jurisdiction, condemning people to an agonizing death. The persecution of the humanitarian and non-governmental organizations that provide assistance to all those people must also stop. It is time for Brussels to take responsibility for those incidents and to take the appropriate measures, rather than confining itself to bombastic statements of regret.

**Mr. Dai Bing** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank the representatives of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) for their briefings.

Irregular migration has persisted for years in the Mediterranean Sea and constitutes a common challenge to States of the region. In 2015, the Security Council adopted resolution 2240 (2015), which authorizes States of the region and organizations to target vessels involved in migrant smuggling and human trafficking for inspection and disposal and to combat irregular migration networks. Recent years have seen some efforts by various parties in that regard. However, it should be noted that the problem of irregular migration in the Mediterranean remains complex and grave. According to the IOM, since September last year, more than 1,000 people have died or gone missing in the Mediterranean Sea in the course of smuggling. Tragedies such as capsizing and drowning have continued unabated. The situation requires continued international attention.

China notes that, from today onwards, the relevant authorization in resolution 2240 (2015) will expire. However, as the migrant smuggling still runs rampant, the end of the authorization contained in the resolution does not mean the end of regional cooperation in combating the smuggling of migrants. The countries of origin, transit and destination of migrants should continue to uphold the principle of shared responsibilities and deepen their cooperation in intelligence-sharing, joint law enforcement, maritime surveillance and rescue and the combating of criminal financial networks for smuggling, so as to jointly mitigate the impact of illegal migration on regional stability and development. Europe and other developed countries should continue to provide Libya and other relevant countries with equipment, logistics and financial support to help them strengthen their capacity to effectively combat migrant smuggling and human trafficking.

In that process, all parties should place human rights protection at the centre of the fight against illegal migration. All countries should fulfil their obligations under international human rights law and international refugee law, respect the principles of the prohibition on collective expulsion and non-refoulement and ensure that all migrants and refugees have equal access to sources of basic livelihood, health services and education, so that those countries effectively fulfil their commitments to the protection of human rights.

The causes of irregular migration on the high seas off the coast of Libya are complex, with extreme poverty, social unrest, armed conflict and other issues being major contributing factors. That issue cannot be effectively addressed through forced interception and deportation alone. Only by enabling people to live and work in peace can the root causes driving irregular migration be eliminated. We call on developed countries to increase support and assistance to the countries of origin of refugees to help them develop economies and improve people's livelihoods. Wanton external military intervention by some countries has resulted in protracted instability in countries such as Libya and Syria and has given rise to terrorism in the Sahel region. It is they who unleashed the problem of irregular migration in the Mediterranean Sea in the first place, and it is they who should shoulder responsibilities for the past, and more important, for the present situation.

In September this year, leaders of China and African countries successfully held the Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, at which the Beijing Action Plan was adopted with the pledge to strengthen cooperation in combating irregular migration and human trafficking on the African continent. China will continue to provide constructive assistance to Africa in addressing illegal migration and to contribute to the stability and development of the region.

**Mr. Hwang** (Republic of Korea): I extend my gratitude to Director Dhanapala of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and Mr. Liljert of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) for their comprehensive briefings.

Over the past year, the Mediterranean Sea has remained a perilous route for migrants and refugees trying to reach Europe from Africa and risking their lives during dangerous journeys. Those crossings in the Mediterranean Sea, partially caused by the eruption of conflicts in the Sahel and the Sudan, have led to the tragic drownings of thousands and human rights abuses against migrants and refugees, which require an urgent response from the international community.

In that regard, my delegation stresses the following points.

First, with the Security Council deciding to not renew resolution 2240 (2015), which authorizes the inspection on the high seas of vessels suspected of migrant smuggling and human trafficking from Libya,

the role of regional arrangements, such as the European Union Naval Force Operation IRINI, becomes even more important in combating those criminal activities. We appreciate the efforts of the European Union Naval Force Mediterranean Operation IRINI to disrupt the migrant smuggling and human trafficking networks by identifying intelligence assets and sharing them with neighbouring countries, and rescuing desperate people on the high seas off Libya's coast. That has contributed to the implementation of resolution 2240 (2015) and subsequent resolutions. In that regard, we expect the international community, including the Security Council, to continue to explore a more effective mechanism to deter criminal activities affecting migrants and refugees in the region.

Secondly, the international community should step up its assistance to Libya — one of the major sites of transit and departure for migrants and refugees — with a view to strengthening its capacity to respond more holistically to migrant smuggling and human trafficking. Continuous cases of migrant deaths in shipwrecks off the coast of Libya demonstrate the urgent need to rebuild a capable and unified maritime and port governance structure and enhance its border-control capacity. We commend the assistance provided by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the IOM to the Libyan authorities in that regard, including training and equipment. We also call on the Libyan authorities to establish legal and policy frameworks to combat migrant smuggling and human trafficking that are centred on treating migrants and refugees within its territories in line with Libya's international human rights obligations.

Thirdly, it is essential to enhance international coordination to address the root causes of irregular migration. As irregular migration in the region results from multiple cross-border factors such as poverty, food insecurity, armed conflict and climate change, the United Nations role in facilitating the efforts of various actors is critical. In that regard, we appreciate the role of the United Nations-African Union-European Union task force on migration, particularly in supporting the protection of migrants in Libya and the voluntary return of migrants to their countries of origin. We echo the Secretary-General's recommendation that all Member States should enhance and diversify pathways for the admission and stay for migrants and refugees on the basis of robust international human rights standards and humanitarian considerations.

For its part, the Republic of Korea is committed to working with regional actors in line with the Global Compact for Migration of 2018 and the Global Compact on Refugees of 2018 and on the basis of our deepening partnership with African and European countries.

**Mr. Kanu** (Sierra Leone): I have the honour of delivering the statement on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council plus (A3+), namely, Algeria, Guyana, Mozambique and my own country, Sierra Leone.

The A3+ wishes to thank the briefers — Director Dhanapala of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and Director Liljert of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) — for their insightful and updated report on the situation of migrants and refugees in Libya.

The unregulated migration flow through Libya to Europe has enabled the proliferation of organized smuggling and human trafficking networks, operating with impunity in blatant disregard of international law and human rights standards. While acknowledging a notable decrease in migrant and refugee crossings, fatalities and disappearances according to the most recent report of the Secretary-General on this matter (S/2024/642), we note with alarm that the Mediterranean Sea off the coast of Libya continues the most perilous route to Europe, claiming countless lives.

It is worth noting that that stark reality underscores the urgent need for collective, comprehensive and sustained action to address the current crisis. We therefore welcome the recently held Trans-Mediterranean Migration Forum in Tripoli — a crucial event hosted by Libya and supported by the United Nations Support Mission in Libya. The Forum underscored the ongoing need for concerted efforts to address the complex realities of refugees and migration off the coast of Libya. In that regard, we reaffirm our strong and urgent support for the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air.

In the light of the fact that the Mediterranean Sea off the coast of Libya remains a dangerous transshipment route for migrants and refugees, the A3+ underscores the need to prioritize a multifaceted response to the Mediterranean migrant crisis, focusing first on enhanced assistance and search and rescue operations to prevent losses at sea and, secondly, on robust protection mechanisms for vulnerable

individuals, including refugees and asylum seekers and comprehensive humanitarian support, ensuring dignity and safety for those affected. Concurrently, tackling the underlying drivers that compel individuals to risk their lives crossing the sea is vital. The Security Council and the international community must therefore intensify our collective efforts to address the interlinked factors of conflict and instability, terrorism and violence, poverty and economic inequality, climate change and environmental degradation, among other pressing issues that force men, women and children to flee their homes, seeking safety and better prospects. In parallel, the Council and the international community must take measures to pursue, prosecute and dismantle international human trafficking networks, ensuring that those responsible are held accountable for their crimes.

The A3+ encourages the Libyan authorities, with the support of the international community, to continue their work to effectively improve the plight of migrants and refugees in Libya. We call on the national authorities to ensure that migrants are protected against any human rights violations, including trafficking, torture, sexual violence and extortion. The A3+ also emphasizes the importance of designating safe ports for disembarkation. All migrants, regardless of their origin, faith, age or status, should be treated with equal dignity and respect, in line with international law, human rights law and refugee law.

In conclusion, we urge Libyan political actors to intensify their collective efforts to expeditiously stabilize the country. We firmly believe that stabilizing Libya will enable the country to assert control over its territory, dismantle smuggling and human trafficking networks and alleviate the Mediterranean migrant crisis.

**Mrs. Frazier** (Malta): I thank the briefers for their remarks.

The Mediterranean continues to serve as a perilous migration route. Although, as outlined in the Secretary-General's most recent report (S/2024/642), the overall number of migrants and refugees crossing, dying and going missing in the Mediterranean has decreased, any such case is deeply regrettable. Malta remains committed to saving all lives at sea. We remain equally dedicated to the effective management of mass migration in a manner that is consistent with international law. Malta, along with the European Union and its member States, will continue to respond 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 from other parts of the world. In that context, let us not forget that Russia's continued war of aggression against Ukraine, in violation of the Charter of the United Nations, has resulted in one of the largest displacement crises in the history of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Migratory journeys from countries of origin through countries of transit and aiming for countries of destination are often facilitated by human traffickers and smugglers. The fight against trafficking and smuggling must remain at the heart of the United Nations agenda. In that vein, we highlight the concrete contributions of the European Union Naval Force Mediterranean Operation IRINI in supporting the detection and monitoring of human smuggling and trafficking networks in its area of operation. The expiration of the specific authorizations provided for in resolution 2240 (2015) and its subsequent renewals will not impact Operation IRINI's mandate or modus operandi. We equally stress that those authorizations have never been exclusively directed towards the European Union, despite various attempts by the Russian Federation, including in today's discussion, to paint a different picture and once again distort reality. The continued functioning of Operation IRINI, which is sufficiently provided for under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and other international agreements, will support and enhance the collective efforts seeking to tackle the network of human traffickers and smugglers who profit from human suffering.

We remain convinced that a holistic and whole-of-United Nations system is required to address the situation of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. That includes addressing the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement, including the proliferation of armed conflicts, the lack of economic opportunity, poor governance, natural disasters, crime and violence and climate change. Deepening cooperation with countries of origin, transit and destination is essential.

In conclusion, we stress the need for States to work on curbing irregular departures and countering human trafficking and migrant smuggling in full respect of human rights. The ongoing fight against human traffickers and smugglers can be carried out only in a manner consistent with obligations under international law. Such an approach is fundamental to preventing more lives being endangered.

**Mrs. Chanda** (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Sivanka Dhanapala, Director of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in New York, and Mr. Pär Liljert, Director of the International Organization for Migration Office to the United Nations in New York, for their contributions and for giving us a holistic view of the situation and their work on the ground.

In 2023, almost 8,600 migrants lost their lives along migration routes around the world, making it the deadliest year on record. According to UNHCR, this year, once again, more than 1,500 people died or went missing while trying to reach Europe via the Mediterranean. Those figures highlight the need for action to prevent further losses. Beyond those statistics, there are personal tragedies and individual destinies. The disappearance of thousands of people destabilizes communities and compromises the long-term prospects of peace efforts. Switzerland is deeply concerned about the fate of the thousands of people who have been forced to leave their homes for a variety of reasons. We would like to make three points in that regard.

First, forced displacement must be prevented by tackling its root causes and following a comprehensive approach. The continued increase in forced displacement is caused, among other things, by armed conflict, food insecurity and the consequences of climate change. In that respect, the Security Council must strengthen its commitment to the resolution of armed conflicts and the prevention of crises, including through early-warning systems. The Council must also commit to protecting civilian populations and humanitarian and United Nations personnel.

Secondly, the protection of vulnerable people must be strengthened throughout the length of the migration route. Switzerland is resolutely committed to protecting refugees, displaced persons and migrants. Sustainable solutions are therefore needed in the regions of first reception and along all migration routes. Without that support, they are at risk of losing their lives, disappearing or becoming victims of human trafficking and other human rights violations. It is imperative to put an end to that worrisome trend by strengthening the rule of law. In that respect, we recall the obligation of all States to respect and ensure respect on the ground for international humanitarian law, international human rights law and international law relating to the status of refugees, which govern the protection of displaced persons.

Thirdly, we need solid partnerships for prevention. The second Global Refugee Forum, held last December in Geneva, provided an excellent opportunity to demonstrate that responsibility does not lie solely with Governments. Rather, it is incumbent upon society as a whole to propose solutions that integrate humanitarian, development and peace policy aspects. In order to achieve that, it is essential to promote the socioeconomic integration of migrants and refugees. Their needs and perspectives must also be taken into account, so that they are able to seize the opportunities that arise and create new ones.

In order to tackle those issues effectively, it is essential for the Council to make full use of the means at its disposal to strengthen the protection of displaced persons. Switzerland will continue to work to that end.

**Mr. Wood** (United States of America): I would like to thank the Directors of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) for their briefings. We appreciate the role of the IOM and the High Commissioner for Refugees in helping to ensure that migrants and refugees are treated in accordance with international law.

The United States acknowledges the decision of the co-penholders of resolution 2240 (2015) not to seek renewal of its authorizations for Member States to inspect vessels on the high seas off Libya's coast suspected of being used for migrant smuggling and human trafficking from that country and to seize those vessels confirmed as being used for those purposes. We do, however, remain deeply concerned about migrant smuggling and human trafficking. Since 2015, the European Union Naval Force Mediterranean Operation IRINI has been a key component of international efforts to alleviate the human tragedy of migrant deaths on the high seas off Libya's coast and in the Mediterranean. Through Operation IRINI, the European Union demonstrated its steadfast commitment to rescuing refugees, migrants and victims of trafficking.

The reality is that irregular migration is a challenge that is too large for Operation IRINI to address on its own. We all share responsibility for managing migration on our respective borders and a commitment to promoting safe, orderly, humane and regular migration management. We believe that prioritizing both access to international protection for those who need it and humane border management measures

are essential to addressing forced displacement and the challenges of irregular migration. To that end, the United States welcomed the statements made by the United Nations Support Mission in Libya about the Trans-Mediterranean Migration Forum in Tripoli this past July as an opportunity to advance an approach to migration governance that respects human rights.

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 must recommit to ending the conflicts and reducing the extreme poverty that are both driving many individuals to leave their homes in the first place. The United States stands ready to work constructively with others in that regard.

**Mr. Montalvo Sosa** (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am grateful for the information provided by the briefers.

As my delegation has stated on previous occasions, Ecuador has a tradition of international protection for migrants and asylum seekers. Its efforts to promote the regularization of refugees and migrants have been recognized by the International Organization for Migration and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. An example of that is the recent issuance of regulations establishing a new immigration amnesty and regularization process that will benefit approximately 100,000 people.

Ecuador experiences every dimension and facet of migration. We are a country of origin, destination, transit, return and even refuge. It is from that comprehensive vantage point that Ecuador promotes safe, orderly, regular and responsible migration that guarantees the human rights of people in a situation of human mobility without criminalizing it.

The Mediterranean region has gained global attention as a result of the migration of thousands of people who cross its waters in search of refuge or asylum or new opportunities; many of those people resort to risky methods to reach their destination. My delegation takes note of the disturbing numbers of deaths and disappearances in the Mediterranean during the most recent period covered by the report of the Secretary-General (S/2024/642) on the implementation of resolution 2698 (2023), and we echo his observations and recommendations.

In that context, and without prejudice to the non-renewal of resolution 2240 (2015), I highlight the following three points.

First, priority must be given to assistance, search-and-rescue efforts, protection and humanitarian support for people crossing the Mediterranean Sea. States should ensure that rescued migrants are assigned a safe port of disembarkation to prevent them from ending up in detention centres where they are exposed to abuse and extortion.

Secondly, international cooperation plays a key role in addressing the issue of migration in the Mediterranean. We are pleased to learn that the European Union and countries of origin, transit and destination renewed or established partnerships with a number of northern African countries, including Libya, on international migration governance. Those initiatives should be promoted and strengthened.

Thirdly, it is essential to combat human trafficking and migrant smuggling networks by strengthening the enforcement of national laws, supporting national agencies and providing victims with assistance. Ecuador stresses the need to implement the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees.

Finally, solutions to irregular migration cannot consist only of preventing departures but must also address the drivers of migration in countries of origin; those drivers include conflict, lack of opportunity and the absence of the rule of law.

**Mrs. Jaraud-Darnault** (France) (*spoke in French*): We thank the representatives of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) for their briefings.

The challenges posed by trafficking in persons off the Libyan coast are enormous. France, alongside its European Union (EU) partners, continues to act to stop the trafficking, prevent tragedies in the Mediterranean and address the root causes of population displacement. We are doing so in consultation with the African Union and the United Nations within the framework of the EU/African Union/United Nations group, and in support of the efforts of Libya and its neighbours to combat trafficking in persons.

We have not renewed the authorizations created by resolution 2240 (2015), because no stakeholder needed to use those authorizations. The role of the Council is to find effective solutions, not to exploit discussions on our mechanisms.

In the Mediterranean, the smuggling and trafficking of human beings from Libya need all of our efforts. Together with the European Union and its member States, France is working to protect migrants and to strengthen cooperation between States to combat trafficking networks. France supports the work of UNHCR and the IOM regarding migration in Libya. The European Union and its member States contribute more than €1.5 billion to the budget of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

As part of the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument, the European Union has developed projects to combat the smuggling of migrants and trafficking in human beings in North Africa, totalling €46 million, and that commitment will continue. Similarly, a project to support border and migration management in Libya, implemented with Italy since 2017, is strengthening the operational capacity of the relevant Libyan authorities.

The European Union Naval Force Mediterranean Operation IRINI remains the only actor attempting to enforce the arms embargo off Libya by carrying out vessel inspections, thereby helping to promote Libya's stabilization. It also collects and shares information on migrant trafficking via its flyovers.

Finally, France is committed to the resumption of the political process, so that Libya can regain its unity, sovereignty and stability, free from foreign influence. The absence of a unified Government and stable institutions allows trafficking and smuggling networks to prosper. We must move towards establishing them.

Once again, some are acting in accordance with international law to find solutions. Others engage in armed conflict, foment insecurity and commit human rights violations, which are the primary cause of population displacement around the world. Let us recall that Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine led to one of the biggest crises of population displacement since the Second World War. More than 11 million people have been forcibly displaced, and 6.5 million have been forced to flee Ukraine.

**Mr. Eckersley (United Kingdom):** I thank the representatives of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration for their briefings this afternoon.

We wish to make three points today.

First, the United Kingdom is committed to working with Member States and United Nations agencies to tackle the drivers of irregular migration across Africa and the Mediterranean route and to counter trafficking and people smuggling. To that end, the United Kingdom is supporting the International Organization for Migration's work in Libya, including funding to provide returns and reintegration assistance for vulnerable migrants. The United Kingdom is also building capacity through joint United Kingdom National Crime Agency and Libyan law enforcement work to prosecute the leaders of organized criminal gangs.

Secondly, we are grateful to the Secretary-General for his report on the implementation of resolution 2698 (2023) (S/2024/642). Its description of the human rights situation for migrants is extremely worrisome, including reports of arbitrary detention torture, and mistreatment. Its reports of migrant mass graves in Al-Shuwairf and other areas are extremely serious. All migrants and refugees must be treated with humanity and dignity, and their rights must be fully respected.

Thirdly, we recognize the role that the Libyan authorities are playing in hosting large numbers of migrants and refugees, including from the Sudan. The United Kingdom has provided support, including £2 million of assistance to support up to 150,000 Sudanese refugees in Libya fleeing violence in Darfur. As part of those efforts, we urge the Libyan authorities to work with the United Nations and other humanitarian actors to enhance conditions in migrant detention centres and to ensure that those responsible for any human rights violations are properly held to account. We look forward to continuing to work closely with the Libyan authorities on those issues.

In conclusion, the United Kingdom is committed to countering trafficking and people smuggling and supporting vulnerable migrants. A political solution in Libya would support efforts to address the drivers of irregular migration and would provide peace and stability for Libyans. We remain committed to supporting a Libyan-led and -owned political process under United Nations auspices. We look forward to

working with all Council members as we negotiate the mandate of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya's next month.

**Mr. Iriya (Japan):** I thank Mr. Dhanapala, Director of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in New York, and Mr. Liljert, Director of the International Organization for Migration Office to the United Nations, for their insightful briefings.

At the outset, Japan joins others in commending those Member States that are dedicating assets and resources to fight against migrant smuggling and human trafficking from Libya. Our sincere appreciation also goes to the co-penholders, France and Malta.

Japan welcomes the contributions of the European Union Naval Force Mediterranean Operation IRINI to maintain peace and stability in Libya and the region.

I would like to briefly mention three points today.

First, while the Secretary-General has reported that the overall number of arrivals to Europe across the Mediterranean from North Africa has decreased, Japan remains appalled by the high numbers of deaths and missing persons resulting from the dangerous maritime transit undertaken by migrants seeking a better life. We cannot tolerate such tragedies. Japan is also concerned about reports of human rights violations and abuses against migrants in Libya. Japan calls for further efforts by international and regional organizations and the Member States concerned to prevent such calamities from happening, combat human trafficking and smuggling and assist Libya to build its capacity, in accordance with relevant and applicable international law.

Secondly, Japan stresses the importance of a holistic approach at all stages of migration in countries of origin, transit and destination. We should also address the root causes of irregular migration, including the adverse effects of climate change and economic situations.

Thirdly, Japan reiterates its full support for the United Nations Support Mission in Libya in facilitating a Libyan-led and Libyan-owned political process. Holding long-overdue national elections is the only way to restore the legitimacy of national institutions and bring about political stability in Libya, which will enable better tackling of the problems that Libya is facing, including with regard to migration.

Let me conclude by emphasizing Japan's unwavering support for the human security and dignity of people in vulnerable situations, including those on the painful journey in and through Libya. Japan stands ready to cooperate with Libya and other international partners to alleviate the dire situation that those migrants experience.

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

I thank Director Dhanapala and Director Liljert for today's briefings on this important issue. We greatly value the work of both the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration.

As was already stated by our European Union (EU) colleagues and co-penholders on resolution 2240 (2015), France and Malta, the European Union remains committed to a comprehensive approach to migration, in line with international law and in close coordination with the international community. We know that a critical element of that is the fight against migrant smuggling and human trafficking, including in the Mediterranean. Trafficking networks continue to exploit those in the most vulnerable situations. Our collective efforts are therefore required to effectively combat that challenge, including by disrupting large-scale criminal networks.

It is our clear understanding that the decision not to renew resolution 2240 (2015) will not affect the work of the European Union Naval Force Mediterranean Operation IRINI, and neither does it influence the EU's capability to address migrant smuggling and human trafficking in cooperation with our partners. Operation IRINI's primary mandate is to uphold the implementation of the United Nations arms embargo on Libya. The authorization for that work was renewed by the Council in May. Operation IRINI's secondary task — to support the detection and monitoring of human smuggling and trafficking networks in the Mediterranean — and the EU's work on migration issues more broadly, will continue apace.

Slovenia remains committed to supporting an inclusive Libyan-led and -owned political process. We believe that delivering elections and unifying Libya's State institutions is the best path to comprehensively addressing the numerous issues facing the country, including those relating to migration. We acknowledge that insecurity and conflict in Libya's neighbourhood have exacerbated an already fragile situation. Millions

of Sudanese have been forced to flee in recent months. Many are seeking refuge in Libya. Greater support, access and coordination are needed to address their humanitarian and protection needs.

In conclusion, I reiterate the commitment of Slovenia and the European Union to the fight against human trafficking and smuggling and to a comprehensive approach to migration. We believe that close cooperation among the United Nations, its relevant agencies, regional organizations and all affected countries is key when it comes to every aspect of migration. It starts with addressing root causes — from political instability and poverty to food insecurity and climate change, to centring a human-rights based approach and to promoting safe, orderly and regular migration. The lives of people on the move matter much more than scoring political points.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

**Ms. Zabolotskaya** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): A statement made during this meeting that the Russian Federation was being misleading with regard to resolution 2240 (2015) and the mandate that existed in line with it, which eventually ended via a decision taken not to extend it. In that regard, we would like to offer some clarifications.

Resolution 2240 (2015) provided a mandate to the European Union (EU) operation, nobody else. That comes not from our statements but from European countries themselves during the meeting at which resolution 2240 (2015) was adopted. I would simply like to provide some references.

The first statement was made by the representative of the United Kingdom:

(*spoke in English*)

“All EU member States contributing to the operation now have the authority to interdict them and their boats on the high seas [...] Any migrants encountered in the course of the operation will be taken to Europe as part of established procedures.” (S/PV.7531, p. 2)

(*spoke in Russian*)

Therefore, that was the United Kingdom’s understanding when the resolution was adopted. Recalling that the

statement I just referred to suggested that migrants would be taken to Europe, I am sure they were not.

The second statement was by the representative of France:

(*spoke in English*)

“The resolution aims to give the member States of the European Union the necessary legal guarantees to enable them to successfully conduct the operations provided for within the framework of phase 2-A of the European Union military operation in the southern Central Mediterranean, Operation Sophia, which has been in place since 7 October and provides for inspection and, where necessary, stop and search on the high seas of vessels and boats used in the trafficking of migrants.” (*ibid.*, p. 6)

(*spoke in Russian*)

From that we can see that the mandate was given to the EU operation. That mandate has now ended. Therefore, starting from today, if there are any operations conducted involving migrants, they should fully be in line with international maritime law and other established norms. There are no further mandates that would, for example, authorize the stopping of any vessels on the high seas. There are also some other related issues, but that is a very important point, and we wanted to ensure that it is included in the record of this meeting.

**The President:** As this is the last meeting of the Council under the Slovenian presidency, I would like to thank the United Nations membership for entrusting us with the role of Security Council, which allowed us to preside over this body during the busy month of September. It was an honour. I would like to thank my colleagues behind this table for their understanding and constructive cooperation, especially during high-level week, which was probably one of the busiest ones. I appreciate their collegiality and support. I would also like to thank the Security Council Affairs Division for its support. A big thanks also goes to the interpreters and the support staff. Their professionalism, commitment to the United Nations and flexibility made it possible to successfully conclude our work. Of course, a big thanks also goes to my Slovenian team.

With that, I would like to wish good luck to Switzerland in the coming month.

*The meeting rose at 4.15 p.m.*