International Organization for Migration (IOM)
The UN Migration Agency

74th World Health Assembly Session

Provisional Agenda Item 17.1

COVID-19 response

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Agenda Item 17 on Public health emergencies: preparedness and response

Pillar 2: One billion more people better protected from health emergencies

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Statement by

International Organization for Migration (IOM)

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Honourable Chair, Director General, Distinguished delegates,

While many have faced huge health and socioeconomic impacts from COVID-19, migrants and displaced populations have been especially vulnerable to the pandemic's consequences. In coordination with WHO and key partners, IOM has addressed the health needs of migrants, including internally displaced persons, as part of its overall COVID-19 strategic response and recovery efforts.

For example, in 2020, more than 38,000 trained community health workers (CHWs) implemented RCCE efforts as part of IOM programming. IOM enhanced 100 disease surveillance systems in 29 countries for information-sharing, and reporting. Similarly, IOM supported over 1,000 points of entry to undertake COVID-19 preparedness and response measures, including capacity building activities. IOM continued to support the resettlement of refugees through testing and treatment for both communicable and non-communicable diseases, vaccinations and facilitation of travel in the COVID-19 context, assisting close to 50,000 refugees.

The IOM First Line of Defence (FLoD) was implemented in 18 countries and assisted over 7,000 eligible UN personnel and their dependents with COVID-19 testing, tele-health, medical movement support and other services to stay and deliver.

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On COVID-19 vaccines, in line with UHC principles, we must ensure that all migrants – no matter their legal status –have equitable access. Significant barriers faced by migrants in accessing COVID-19 vaccinations remain, such as the need for a specific ID, absence of firewalls between health and immigration authorities, linguistic and cultural barriers, to name a few.

Looking forward, and noting the report of the Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response, IOM, including as the Coordinator of the UN Network on Migration, will continue advocating for and supporting MS on the inclusion of migrants in national COVID-19 response and pandemic preparedness plans, as well as essential health services. The UN system, through the Network, stands ready to support governments in addressing and reducing vulnerabilities faced by migrants.

Thank you.