NINETY-NINTH SESSION

IOM STAFF SECURITY

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1.   The purpose of this paper is to outline for Member States the background to the Administration's considerations concerning staff security, and provide an update on developments and decisions.

2.   The Administration has a commitment to provide its staff with the most effective security system possible. It also has an obligation to Member States, donors and beneficiaries to have the most effective and cost-effective security system for the delivery of its programmes and operations.

3.   After managing its staff security matters independently for 47 years, IOM joined the United Nations security system (UNSECOORD) in 1998. The decision to do so was taken in the light of increased collaboration with other UN operational agencies in a variety of emergency and post-conflict situations in which the organizations found themselves facing similar security concerns and sought the means to meet these concerns together.

4.   As a participant in the UNSECOORD system, IOM staff security management has been maintained through a single officer at Headquarters (for the purpose of liaison with UNSECOORD, training, resolution of problems) as well as through field resources decided on an individual programme and project basis. Through the terms of its UNSECOORD agreement, IOM has also participated in Security Management Teams in field locations. In terms of the cost of membership, up to 2001 UNSECOORD presented invoices at the local mission level, based on the services rendered.

5.   In 2001, UNSECOORD reorganized the fee system for participating organizations to become effective in 2002, allotting its total budget to participating agencies on the basis of a per capita formula. It also increased the budget substantially. The combination of the overall increase and the change in the system of assessment for the fees are expected to increase the contribution required of IOM to maintain participation to approximately USD 800,000. This increase in cost was not anticipated in the Programme and Budget for 2002.

6.   The notification of this new fee system and rates coincided with an IOM administrative review and assessment of the Organization's participation in the UNSECOORD security system to examine whether the most effective staff security arrangements were indeed being maintained, while remaining cost-effective and responsive to requests for IOM services.

7.   As UNSECOORD requires three months' notice for leaving the system, in December 2001 the Administration provisionally gave notice of intention to withdraw, in order to maximize the options, while continuing to conduct the review. Meetings were held with UNSECOORD in New York to explore the potential for gaining flexibility within the system, both financial and operational. The Director General set out the Administration's thinking and progress in the review in his letter to Member States on 15 February 2002. In addition, the Administration wrote to UNSECOORD to inform them that IOM would not be leaving the system before 1 July 2002.

8.   The review consisted basically of three parts: (a) an assessment of IOM's participation in the UNSECOORD system to date, drawing on the experience of IOM staff; (b) the drafting of a plan of action and budget for setting up an independent system in order to compare costs and coverage with the UNSECOORD arrangements; and (c) an assessment by a security consultant.

9.   As background, it is worth mentioning that IOM membership during the period of the review (1998–2001) increased by 24 countries. During that period, IOM has responded to emergency and post-conflict situations in over a dozen areas of operations, including Timor, Angola, Kosovo and Afghanistan, and has carried out activities in many other insecure situations. There are currently 66 IOM Missions covered under the UNSECOORD arrangement, of which 30 are in Security Phases ranging from Three to Five (Five meaning evacuation and therefore cessation of all operations).

10.   The review revealed that IOM had, on a number of occasions, been unable to respond to requests for services or pursue operational preferences due to UNSECOORD security restrictions. The UNSECOORD decisions were binding for all participating organizations, even though, in some cases, the IOM Administration believed that the security situation for IOM staff, as opposed to UN staff, could have allowed IOM operations to begin or continue. Although the differences in the circumstances were sometimes acknowledged, UNSECOORD on no occasion made a separate assessment or accorded the IOM staff permission to operate outside the restrictions assessed for UN staff. UNSECOORD has maintained throughout, including in response to the Administration's explorations as part of this review, that IOM has to remain in the system with all its financial and operational aspects, or leave. There is no scope for flexibility, partial membership or exceptions.

11.   The review also found that, during this three-year period, there had been a significant increase in IOM expertise in addressing emergency and post-conflict migration challenges in areas such as evacuation, demobilization and reinsertion into civilian life of demobilized soldiers, return and reintegration, health, technical cooperation and capacity-building. This expertise has, in turn, led to an increased demand by states for IOM's services in such areas. By their nature, these activities are mostly in security sensitive regions. The assessment concluded that ongoing and future requests for IOM services would continue to mean that IOM would be working in a high number of security-risk locations.

12.   On the question of whether IOM should remain within the UNSECOORD system or develop its own independent security system, the review concluded that while there were disadvantages to the UNSECOORD system, there were also advantages, but that, in any case, IOM did not currently have in place, and could not put in place in a short timeframe an equivalent independent security system without putting staff security at risk. In addition, regardless of what decision was subsequently taken on the overall security system, the internal IOM security management system required significant upgrading if it were properly to meet ongoing and envisaged field requirements as to technical staff, equipment, training, procedures, policy and security reporting.

13.   As part of the review, a draft plan and budget had been drawn up (see paragraph 8 above) which contained many of the elements recommended for meeting these human and material resources' needs, including the proposal to establish a Staff Security Unit (SSU) to carry out

oversight and related responsibilities for all IOM security matters. As a result of the Administration's ongoing discussions with a number of countries about the concern for staff security, in March 2002 the Department For International Development of the United Kingdom (DFID) approved funding of USD 1.4 million for addressing these immediate needs under a project "to strengthen existing IOM global staff security arrangements through the introduction of targeted, multifaceted, institutional capacity-building activities". This funding was made available irrespective of what decision the Administration may make on the future relationship with UNSECOORD.

14.   The Administration has begun the process of preparing to set up the Staff Security Unit (SSU), hire the Head of Unit and draft a detailed plan for increasing the quantity and quality of IOM's communications equipment. The United Kingdom's contribution will cover costs for the SSU, as well as basic equipment upgrades and technical training through early 2003. The Administration must, in the meantime, determine how to meet ongoing SSU and other security system costs from that point forward to ensure that the best staff security support is maintained.

15.   The Administration's assessment of UNSECOORD mechanisms and security cover, and possible alternatives, will continue, but the Administration has notified UNSECOORD that it will not be leaving the system in 2002.