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IOM International Organization for Migration

**IT'S TIME TO TAKE ACTION AND SAVE LIVES OF MIGRANTS CAUGHT IN CRISIS –**  
WILLIAM LACY SWING IOM DIRECTOR GENERAL  
***INTERNATIONAL MIGRANTS DAY 2013***

**Geneva 17 December 2013** - The International Organization for Migration warns today that unless the international community takes decisive action to address the causes of irregular migration, more migrant lives will be lost at the hands of people smugglers and traffickers.

Observing International Migrants Day (18 December) the Organization's Director General, William Lacy Swing noted that 2013 may have been the costliest year on record in terms of lives lost, for migrants seeking to cross international borders clandestinely.

"We will never know the true total, as many migrants died anonymously in deserts, in oceans or in other accidents," stated Ambassador Swing. "However, our figures show that at least 2,360 migrants died this year while chasing the dream of a new life. These people are desperate – not even a very real fear of death prevents them from making their journey."

The Mediterranean island of Lampedusa, the Caribbean, and the seas off Thailand and Indonesia have all seen tragedies involving overloaded, un-seaworthy vessels going down resulting in the deaths of dozens of migrants per episode.

The US Mexico border area and the desert route from West Africa to Libya are the most dangerous land routes, with migrants perishing in train accidents, murdered, or dying of thirst in their quest for a better life.

"On this International Day we focus on the well-being and safety of migrants. IOM calls for strengthening existing policies or developing new ones to protect the human rights of those who leave home to seek better opportunities. We are ready to assist our Member States and other partners in the development and implementation of policies."

Mr. Swing warned that the doors of previously-welcoming countries are increasingly being shut on the poorest, most desperate migrants. IOM has observed a direct link between tighter border controls and increases in people smuggling, which is now a US\$35-billion dollar a year business.

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“It’s time to take action and save the lives of migrants who would otherwise die while taking desperate measures to cross increasingly restrictive borders. We are calling for measures to enable employers in countries with labour shortages to access potential migrants to work and we need to ensure that these people are not exploited or exposed to gender based violence.

“We need a whole-of-government, whole-of-society approach in the best interests of countries, communities and people, in particular migrants themselves,” continued Mr. Swing.

Conflict and natural disasters are adding to the number of people on the move. Some 5,000 people a day left the Central Philippines following typhoon Haiyan last month. A further 100,000 fled fighting in the Central African Republic in the first half of December.

In 2016 there will be a World Humanitarian Summit: IOM will be asking how the global humanitarian community can ensure that political upheaval, economic stress and natural calamities do not always lead to a second round of challenges whereby migrants feel forced to take desperate measures.

The full figures, trends and analysis will be captured in a report to be issued by IOM.

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