



## International Organization for Migration (IOM)

**Establishment:** founded in 1951 as the Provisional Intergovernmental Committee for the Movement of Migrants from Europe (PICMME)

**Director General:** Ambassador William Lacy Swing

**Member States:** 146 Member States

**Areas of Work:** migration, human rights, development

**Areas of Cooperation with the OAS:** Human Rights of Migrants, Labour Migration, Combat Human Trafficking and Democracy Strengthening, Gender equality

**Headquarters:** International Organization for Migration (IOM)

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CH-1211 Geneva 19

Switzerland

**Website:** <http://www.iom.int>

### BACKGROUND

The IOM was founded in December of 1951 and was officially operational in early 1952. The Constitution of the Organization, which contains its powers and competence, was adopted on October 19, 1953 and entered into force on November 30, 1954.

The immense flux of migrations from Western Europe which followed the Second World War, led authorities to create an organization that could oversee and identify resettlement countries for the estimated 11 million people displaced by the war. The Organization strategically assisted people with transport needs for nearly the one million migrants during the 1950s.

The Organization's mandate evolved with the years from a logistics agency to a migration agency, as evidenced by its name changes from PICMME to the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (ICEM) in 1952, to the Intergovernmental Committee for Migration (ICM) in 1980 to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in 1989.

### OBJECTIVES

The scope of the work of the IOM has widened considerably since its creation. Its current mandate is to work "with governments and civil society to advance the understanding of migration issues, encourage social and economic development through migration, and uphold the human dignity and well-being of migrants". This wider scope was followed by an increasing budget, which to date totals close to US\$1 billion. In addition, the IOM employs over 5,400 staff members in over 100 countries worldwide. This

Organization strongly believes in the principle that humane and orderly migration is an advantage from societies across the globe.

In order to fulfill its mandate the IOM works with different partners to<sup>1</sup>:

- Assist in meeting the growing operational challenges of migration management.
- Advance understanding of migration issues.
- Encourage social and economic development through migration.
- Uphold the human dignity and well-being of migrants.

The IOM has multiple strategic focuses that better enable the Organization to reach the goals that it has set out. The following objectives are the result of decision-making policies that the IOM intends to accomplish<sup>2</sup>:

- To provide secure, reliable, flexible and cost-effective services for persons who require international migration assistance.
- To enhance the humane and orderly management of migration and the effective respect for the human rights of migrants in accordance with international law.
- To offer expert advice, research, technical cooperation and operational assistance to States, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders, in order to build national capacities and facilitate international, regional and bilateral cooperation on migration matters.
- To support States, migrants and communities in addressing the challenges of irregular migration, including through research and analysis into root causes, sharing information and spreading best practices, as well as facilitating development-focused solutions.
- To be a primary reference point for migration information, research, best practices, data collection, compatibility and sharing.
- To promote, facilitate and support regional and global debate and dialogue on migration, including through the International Dialogue on Migration, so as to advance understanding of the opportunities and challenges it presents, the identification and development of effective policies for addressing those challenges and to identify comprehensive approaches and measures for advancing international cooperation.
- To assist States to facilitate the integration of migrants in their new environment and to engage diasporas, including as development partners.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.iom.int/jahia/Jahia/about-iom/mission/lang/en>

<sup>2</sup> *ibid*

## DIRECTOR GENERAL



Ambassador William Lacy Swing was appointed Director General of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) on June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2008.

Prior to being named Director General of the IOM, he served as UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) from May 2003 to January 2008; during this period Ambassador Swing was leading all aspects of the largest UN peacekeeping operation in history. Before that, he was the Special Representative to the Secretary-General for Western Sahara and Chief of Mission for the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) from 2001 to 2003.

Ambassador Swing obtained a Bachelor of Arts from Catawba College in North Carolina and a Bachelor of Divinity from Yale University. He went on to do his graduate studies at Tubingen University in Germany and at Harvard University. He speaks English, French and German.

## GOVERNING BODIES

### **The Council**

The Council of the IOM is the supreme body of the organization, where every Member State has one representative and one vote. The mandate of the Council is to establish policy-making decisions.

### **The Executive Committee**

The Executive Committee is composed of 33 Member States who are elected for two-year periods. The mandate of this body is to “examine and review the policies, operations and administration of the Organization”.

### **The Administration**

The administration is composed of the Director General and Deputy Director General that are appointed by the Council. The administration is in charge for administering and managing the Organization within the competence the Constitution stipulates. Moreover, the Administration must respect the policies and decisions of the Council and the Executive Committee when taking an administrative decision.

### **The Office of the Director General**

The Director General is the highest in the executive official’s hierarchy of the Organization. The Director General and the Deputy Director General are independently elected by the members of the Council for a five year term.

The Office has the mandate to manage the Organization and oversee the “formulation of coherent policies and oversight of activities” to guarantee conformity with the strategic goals that are enounced. To ensure the best quality of work the Office is divided in units that are namely:

- Office of the Chief of Staff;
- Office of the Inspector General;
- Office of Legal Affairs;
- Senior Regional Advisers;
- Spokesperson;
- Gender Coordination Unit;
- Ombudsperson;
- Staff Security Unit; and
- Occupational Health Unit.

## COOPERATION WITH THE OAS

The first official legal document that was signed between the IOM and the OAS was the *Cooperation Agreement between the Organization of American States and The International Organization for Migration (IOM)* in 2009. This Cooperation Agreement was the first step undertaken by the OAS in order to improve cooperation with the IOM in the following areas:

- International Migration Law
- Labour Migration
- Combat Human Trafficking
- Human Rights of Migrants
- Democracy Strengthening
- Education for Migrant Youth and Children

In addition, Article VI of the Cooperation Agreement stipulates that both Organizations will engage in general coordination of activities and consultations. Article VIII mentions the considered activities that could be carried out by both Organizations, they include:

- Conduction of workshops and activities on labour migration, counter-trafficking and migrants' human rights and democracy strengthening.
- Preparation of research and projects of cooperation and information exchange on issues of common interest for both Organizations.
- Follow up on migration-related resolutions of the SOAs,
- Organizing inter-institutional coordination meetings,
- Attending each other's meetings subject to and in accordance with the rules governing the pertinent meeting.
- Exchanging information and documentation to facilitate work on matters of mutual interest pursuant to the policies and internal rules of each party.

The IOM has participated in 22 thematic sessions held within the Framework of the OAS Permanent Council's Special Commission on Migration, as well as a joint Workshops on mixed migration flows (November 2009) and extra-continental migration in the Americas (April 2010).

On July 9, 2012, the OAS Secretary General met with Ambassador Laura Thompson, Assistant General Director of the IOM to discuss issues pertaining to the rights of migrant workers and their families, among others.

The OIM and the OAS also regularly cooperate on matters of migrant security and human trafficking.

On April 29 2013, an OIM delegation visited the OAS in order to discuss new avenues for bilateral cooperation as well as cooperation in the context of the Joint Summits Working Group. Also on that date, the IOM and the OAS hosted a Course on the Key Challenges and Opportunities of International Migration at the OAS headquarters. The main objective of this course was to raise awareness and inform the audience about the trends in international migration in the hemisphere, the challenges and opportunities of labor migration; migration and the millennium development goals and the post-2015 agenda; the links between migration and development and the social effects of remittances.

On September 30, 2013, the Organization of American States (OAS) hosted the 52<sup>nd</sup> OAS Lecture Series of the Americas “Making Migration a Positive Factor for Development in the Americas” with the presence of Ambassador William Lacy Swing, Director General of the International Organization of Migration (IOM) as the keynote speaker. The event also counted with the participation of Susan Martin, Director of the Institute for the Study of International Migration of Georgetown University and the opening remarks were addressed by the Secretary General of the OAS, José Miguel Insulza. The event served to analyze the trends, challenges and the future of international migration, including the recommendations and perceptions on a topic that is considered of growing importance in the region.

## SOURCES

Cooperation Agreement

[IOM Website](#)

[OAS Press Releases](#)

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