

WMU Migration by Sea Symposium

26-27 April 2016

**Opening Speech, Dr Cleopatra Doumbia-Henry, President,
WMU**

I wish to extend a hearty welcome all of you today to the Migration by Sea Symposium. We are proud to be your host of this Symposium. We have organized this Symposium jointly with the University of Genoa. My very special thanks for this cooperation to Professor Paolo Comanducci, Rector, University of Genoa.

I wish to extend a very special welcome to our Guest speakers and in particular to our keynote speakers for today: Ms Maria Gelin, Deputy-Director General, Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation; Mr Fabrice Leggeri, Executive Director, FRONTEX; Captain Suat Hayri Aka, Deputy Undersecretary, Ministry of Transport, Maritime Affairs and Communications, Republic of Turkey; Mr Peter Hinchliffe, Secretary General, International Chamber of Shipping (ICS); The Reverend Father Bruno Ciceri, Apostleship of the Sea International; the representative of the IMO Secretary-General, Mr Chris Trelawny, Special Advisor to the Secretary-General on

Maritime Security and Facilitation. To the various organizations who responded positively to our request for their participation on this issue: the IOM, UNHCR, ILO, DOALOS, ICS, ITF, the US Coast Guard and to all the other speakers who responded positively to our call.

To our moderator for this event, the well-known and highly respected, Mr Michael Grey, Columnist and former Editor, Lloyd's List and Fairplay. He has been a true friend and supporter of WMU. We are greatly indebted to him.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the tragedy of the Mediterranean Sea continues. According to both IOM and UNHCR, in 2015, around one million people arrived in the European Union through the waters of the Mediterranean Sea, almost entirely via the Eastern and Central Mediterranean routes. The number of dead and missing persons reached almost 4,000. In just the first four months of 2016, 179,552 refugees and migrants have reached Europe by sea across the Mediterranean and Aegean Seas. At least 761 have died or gone missing attempting the journey. The UNHCR reported last week that up to 500 people died when an overcrowded boat capsized en route from Libya to Europe. There is a clear and urgent need to bring the perpetrators of the acts to justice.

This recent tragedy resulted in a position taken just a few days ago, on 23 April 2016, by the United Nations Security Council. It deplored this recent maritime tragedy in the Mediterranean Sea, emphasizing the need for better coordination of efforts to deal with the smuggling of migrants. Members of the Council expressed “grave concern” at the proliferation of, and endangerment of lives by the smuggling of migrants in the Mediterranean Sea, including off the coast of Libya. They also expressed their “concern at the implications for regional stability posed by transnational organized crime and illicit activities such as human trafficking and the smuggling of migrants and condemned and deplored the said acts which undermine further the process of stabilization of Libya and endanger the lives of people.”

The Security Council referred to its [resolution 2240](#) (2015), which is intended to disrupt the organized criminal enterprises engaged in migrant smuggling and prevent the loss of life. Expressing its strong support to countries in the region affected by the smuggling of migrants, the Council emphasized the need to improve coordination of efforts in order to strengthen an effective multilateral response to this common challenge, and in order to

protect vulnerable migrants from being victimized by human traffickers.

The Council also urged all Member States, including countries of origin, destination and transit, to cooperate with one another and with relevant international and regional organizations, including the International Organization for Migration (IOM), in addressing illicit migration flows, and dismantling smuggling networks in the region.

In addition, the Council reemphasized that migrants, including asylum-seekers and regardless of their migration status, should be treated with humanity and dignity and that their rights should be fully respected.

In this regard, the Council urged all States to comply with their obligations under international law, including international human rights law, international humanitarian law, and refugee law.

Un Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon, addressing the 93rd meeting of the Development Committee at Spring Meetings of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank Group in Washington last week stated:

“Supporting States in addressing large movements of refugees and migrants is an issue ripe for more concerted multilateral action....We must strengthen international cooperation mechanisms, and boost our collective work.” He noted that

Governments are struggling for solutions and often responding by shutting borders, detaining asylum seekers and migrants, and other measures. He indicated that to strengthen support, the UN will hold a high-level discussion on 19 September in New York to discuss ways to address large movements of refugees and migrants. In addition, next month, Mr. Ban will convene the [World Humanitarian Summit](#) in Istanbul, Turkey, for world leaders to come together with the private sector, civil society, academia and others, to find new ways to address the root causes of humanitarian challenges. As part of the Summit, there will be a high-level round table on forced displacement, and a special session on migration.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, addressing a conference on Forced Displacement: A Global Challenge, at the World Bank in Washington last week also stated that “Refugees have a right to asylum – not bias and barbed wire”.

The two-day discussion will enable an exchange of information and discussion on the challenges currently being faced by this huge wave of migration, which is often fuelled by traffickers. This issue is on the agenda of all European Governments, including the

European Union itself, and must be on those of countries from which these migrants and refugees originate. As a number of meetings of regional and international bodies and governments are scheduled to discuss these issues this year.

It is our hope that this discussion in an academic environment can make a small contribution to identifying the issues and allowing for an exchange of information, ideas as well as strategies for a longer-term solution to these significant challenges facing our world in the 21st century.