



11 June 2014 – Over 50,000 migrants and asylum seekers have reached Italy from North Africa in the first six months of 2014, compared to a total of 40,304 migrants in for the entire [year of 2013](#)

Director General William Lacy Swing from the International Organization for Migration ([IOM](#)) [calls for](#)

urgent international action and intensified cooperation following the arrival of over 5,470 migrants by boat in Sicily over the last weekend only.

While Operation Mare Nostrum – carried out since last October by the Italian Government – has saved thousands of lives, deaths at sea are continuing. “The tragedy of migrants drowning at sea is unfortunately a global phenomenon, not just a Mediterranean emergency,” said Ambassador Swing. “For example, over 60 migrants coming from Somalia and Eritrea died a few days ago while trying to cross the Red Sea to Yemen.”

“Migrants risk their lives because they are desperate and become victims of criminals who take advantage of their desperation. There is an urgent need to increase international cooperation to crack down on traffickers and smugglers, who must be identified and prosecuted,” underlined the Director General. “The unnecessary deaths of these migrants and asylum seekers is an affront to all civilized nations,” he further stated.

IOM is calling for a high level debate on mixed migratory flows that could bring together countries of destination, of origin and transit and all concerned actors and partners along the Mediterranean routes to Europe.

“We need to urgently look at a comprehensive range of actions that we can take together to

prevent further loss of life. These include the enhancement of legal avenues for migrants seeking better prospects in Europe and the establishment of various mechanisms and measures in countries of transit in north Africa to provide migrants and asylum seekers in need of protection with opportunities to receive legal counselling,” said Mr. Swing.