

IOM will officially establish a presence in Djibouti with the opening of an office in the country on May 13, 2009 and the signing of an agreement with the government outlining areas of cooperation on migration issues in an increasingly strategic area linking three continents.

Djibouti's Minister of Employment Moussa Ahmed Hassan and IOM Regional Representative for East Africa, Ashraf El Nour, will open the office at a ceremony attended by government officials, the US and French ambassadors to Djibouti and senior UN officials.

Through the agreement and subject to funding, IOM in Djibouti would work to build the capacity of the government on international migration law and on addressing migration challenges including human trafficking and irregular migration, assistance to displaced and return migration. The office will also facilitate closer contact with the Inter-governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) which is headquartered in Djibouti, many of whose members are also IOM members.

"Djibouti faces unique migration challenges simply because of where it is. It links Europe, Africa and the Middle East but is inherently a gateway from the Horn of Africa to the Middle East. Djibouti is also increasingly becoming a source and transit country for migrants moving across the Gulf of Aden and beyond with security concerns in the region making it the preferred transit country. IOM has a role to play in helping the government and the region address these challenges," said El Nour.

The opening of the office with the support of the Djibouti authorities and British government will also be accompanied by the start of an IOM information campaign against irregular migration and human trafficking in Djibouti. The authorities are concerned over the issues of unaccompanied minors and the growing use of Djibouti as a transit point for Somalis and Ethiopians.

The campaign is part of a broader European Commission funded regional effort in five of the six IGAD countries (Djibouti, Ethiopia, Sudan, Somalia, Kenya and Uganda) to ensure potential migrants are aware of the risks involved in irregular migration by land and sea, especially through the Gulf of Aden and the East African migration route which stretches from the Horn of Africa to and through Sudan and Libya and across the Mediterranean sea.