

19 September High-level Meeting on Addressing Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants

Core Messages related to the UN Secretary General's Report:

In Safety and Dignity: Addressing Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants

Background

Large-scale movements of refugees and migrants are a global phenomenon, affecting all Member States in various ways and require closer cooperation and more robust, equitable and predictable responses, including greater responsibility-sharing. In December 2015, the General Assembly decided to convene a high-level plenary meeting on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants on 19 September 2016 and requested the Secretary-General to prepare a comprehensive report setting out recommendations on ways to address large movements of refugees and migrants (A/70/L.34).

The messages below reflect and inform the key elements of the Secretary General's report: *In Safety and Dignity: Addressing Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants* which was released on 9 May 2016 (A/70/59).

Ten core messages

1. Large movements of refugees and migrants are not new and will continue and possibly increase, requiring greater international attention

- People have always migrated to seek a better future or sought refuge as a means to ensure safety and survival. Most people in the world today have likely experienced such movements in their family histories.
- In recent decades, many large scale movements have taken place in the developing world, with some of the poorest countries dealing with the challenge of hosting large numbers of refugees for decades.
- Today's figures on international migrants, refugees and internal displacement are higher than at any time since we started gathering data :
 - In 2015 the number of international migrants reached 244 million - an increase of 41 per cent since 2000
 - There are 19.6 million refugees¹ - a 24 per cent increase since 2000 and the highest level recorded in a generation.
 - Today, the world hosts almost 40 million internally displaced persons - a 89 per cent increase since 2000.

¹ This includes 14.4 million refugees who fall under the mandate of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and 5.2 million Palestine refugees who fall under the mandate of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)

2. When migration is safe, regular, orderly and responsible, it has a positive impact for migrants, as well as their countries of origin and destination

- Migration contributes to development in many ways: remittances help to pull families out of poverty; migrants have a high rate of entrepreneurship; returning migrants bring home new skills; diaspora networks build trade relations.
- As a result of growing economic integration, multiple inequalities, sustained poverty, insecurity and demographic shifts, global migration is expected to continue to grow.
- Migration governance must improve to meet the demands of our era – in implementation of the Sustainable Development Agenda’s target of facilitating ‘safe, regular, orderly and responsible migration.’

3. The reasons for large movements of refugees and migrants need to be better addressed

- People must have real choices about whether to migrate. Many move due to lack of access to opportunities, rising inequality and poverty where they live.
- Forced displacement is different than voluntary migration and comes about mainly as a result of conflict and persecution with violations of international humanitarian law and human rights obligations. However climate change and disasters are increasingly drivers of displacement as well.
- State actions should focus on preventing and resolve conflicts, implementing the sustainable development goals and targets, and reducing the risks, and mitigate the impacts, of natural disasters and climate change. While important commitments have been made, this should be followed by greater action.
- Internally displaced persons need better protection to uphold their rights. They need safety and support in their area of refuge in their home countries. When they do not have this support, they may cross international borders in order to seek protection and assistance in other countries.

4. The international response needs to be more robust and collaborative amongst a variety of stakeholders to address large movements of refugees and migrants

- The international response to forced displacement must be strengthened. The same applies with irregular migration. Recent events have demonstrated that ad hoc responses to large population movements by individual countries are not sufficient.
- A small number of countries bear a disproportionate responsibility for hosting refugees and funding humanitarian operations. Some 86 per cent of refugees are hosted in developing countries. Just eight countries host more than half of all refugees (not including Palestinian refugees). 10 countries provide 75 per cent of the budget of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.
- Conventions and regional instruments for the protection and support of refugees have saved millions of lives and must be supported and implemented as the bedrock of international refugee protection.
- Migrants do not benefit from comparable, dedicated protection regimes and there is

no global framework for governance of migration.

- Safe, orderly, regular and responsible migration can only be achieved through a comprehensive, coherent and long-term policy framework that addresses the drivers behind migration, countries' legitimate need for labour migration, and the sovereign right of States to determine who to admit.

5. This is the first time the General Assembly has called for a high-level meeting on large movements of refugees and migrants and it is a historic opportunity to develop a better international response

- This is a watershed moment to strengthen governance of international migration and a unique opportunity for creating a more responsible, predictable system for responding to large movements of refugees and migrants.

6. A better international response means more international responsibility sharing, enhanced coordination and more collective action

- The Report sets out comprehensive, new Global Commitments for Addressing Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants which include:
 - A Compact on Responsibility-Sharing for Refugees with a commitment to share responsibility with states receiving large numbers of refugees – including financial support, more resettlement opportunities, opportunities for family reunion, scholarships and temporary protection regimes. UNHCR will initiate and coordinate a comprehensive refugee response plan in specific situations involving large movements of refugees and plan for solutions – with other actors – from the beginning. Access to the territory, adequate reception conditions and opportunities for self-reliance for refugees are important elements of a comprehensive response, as are partnerships, support to host communities, and more development aid for host countries and communities.
 - The development of a Compact for Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration including strengthening international governance of migration and developing more pathways for safe, regular and orderly migration. In addition, the report also calls for a state led process to developing guidance for dealing with migrants with particular vulnerabilities and for bringing the International Organization for Migration (IOM) into the United Nations.

7. A better international response means that refugees and migrants will be better protected en route, at borders, and on return

- All people on the move have human rights, whether as refugees fleeing conflict and human rights violations, or as economic migrants seeking to improve their prospects. Many refugees and migrants are vulnerable and require particular assistance and/or protection. This includes, for example, unaccompanied and separated children,

victims of trafficking and survivors of sexual and gender-based violence.

- More action is needed against smugglers and traffickers. There is a need for States to review their national legislation to make sure they are in line with standards on migrant smuggling and human trafficking.
- When rejected asylum seekers or migrants return to their home countries, or when refugees voluntarily repatriate, they need full support to reintegrate. Countries of origin should cooperate in re-admitting their own citizens.
- More steps are required to ensure that migrants can travel through safe and orderly channels so as not to have to resort to irregular channels.

8. Improving the international response implies recognising refugees and migrants' contribution to countries of destination and countries of origin and facilitating their economic and social integration.

- Countries should take practical measures to reduce the costs associated with migration and strengthening the contribution of migrants and migration by, inter alia, implementing the relevant provisions of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.
- Well-integrated migrants and refugees are able to contribute to host societies
- More support is required to host communities to assist with the initial challenge of hosting large unexpected movements of refugees and to facilitate inclusion.

9. Countering discrimination and addressing xenophobia promotes social and economic inclusion

- There is much misinformation regarding the impact of refugees and migrants and prejudice, stigma and discrimination towards foreigners. We must reject the stereotypes and myths around migrants and migration, provide the public with accurate information about the many contributions of migrants to host societies, redouble our efforts to eliminate discrimination, especially in the labour market, and combat xenophobia.
- The Secretary General is initiating a global campaign to counter xenophobia, emphasizing direct, personal contact between refugees and migrants on the one hand and the communities that receive them on the other.
- Inclusion of refugees and migrants into host societies is in everyone's interests. The efforts of all are needed.

10. Refugee and migrant crises are not insurmountable

- We must build on international initiatives, including the General Assembly High Level Dialogues on International Migration and Developments, the Sustainable Development Goals, the first World Humanitarian Summit (Istanbul, 23-24 May 2016), the Climate Change Treaty, and the Sendai United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction. There also many voluntary, state-led initiatives on which we can build, such as the Global Forum on Migration and Development, the

Solutions Alliance and the Nansen Initiative. The challenge is to implement the tools we already have rather than to develop new ones.

- The first World Humanitarian Summit offers a unique opportunity to change the approach to forced displacement, to address the humanitarian and development nexus, dimensions of protracted forced displacement, including practical, financial, nexus, and to promote the Sustainable Development Goals' pledge to leave no one behind. It also offers an opportunity to garner support and commitment of participants to strengthen the implementation of international laws and policy frameworks to improve the protection of refugees and IDPs and to contribute to the 19 September high level meeting on large movements of refugees and migrants.
- We must do more in the areas of conflict prevention, rule of law and good governance, especially at the regional level. When people are forced to flee, we can ensure, together, that they can find safety, can live in dignity and with respect for their human rights, and can find solutions for themselves and their families. When people seek opportunity and when labour markets demand migrant workers, we must be able to provide channels for regular, safe and orderly migration, recognizing that movement of peoples has been a major contributor to economic growth and to human development.

For more information please contact: Noel Calhoun, Office of the Special Advisor of the Secretary-General on the High Level Plenary Meeting on Addressing Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants: calhoun@un.org