



PRESS RELEASE

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on International Migration**

Delivered at the UN DESA Coordination Meeting

1. This year, at this moment in history—the world is looking to us.
2. The people in this room—and those who will be gathering in these halls in the coming weeks and months—are responsible for helping to solve one of the most serious humanitarian and political crises in decades.
3. You know the numbers well: More than 60 million men, women and children are displaced; 20 million are refugees; and there are countless millions more migrants subject to abuse, exploitation, and discrimination.
4. The failure of the international system to provide for them has led to immense human suffering, as well as to political polarization.
5. Just this week we learned that in the Mediterranean theater alone, European officials believe some 40,000 people constitute a vast smuggling enterprise that will reap upwards of €10 billion this year—profits purloined from desperate Syrian families, in so many cases, who raised the funds by selling their homes at fire-sale prices to flee aerial bombings.
6. Almost half a million have perished in Syria; thousands more have died trying to reach safety. And far too many have been children—in fact, so far this year, 36% of all asylum seekers reaching Europe's shores are children.
7. Once in a while, the media captures a devastating image of a dead child, etches it on our minds and stains our moral conscience. But the vast majority drown out of sight.
8. Those politicians who turn a blind eye to such tragedies to stay in power—or even worse, stir up anti-immigrant sentiments in order to gain power—should remember that such stains do not wash away.

9. To paraphrase Macbeth, even the oceans that take their lives, cannot wash away such damned spots.
10. The political damage is devastating, too.
11. The rise of the anti-migrant, authoritarian right, especially in Europe, is fed by our collective failure—a responsibility and burden that should weigh very heavily in this room.
12. Yesterday, Amnesty International issued the stark assessment that not only is the refugee regime in jeopardy, not only are migrants of all kinds becoming ever more marginalized, but that the entire international human rights architecture is at risk.
13. It is not other people’s business—it is ours.
14. So we must move through this year with exceptional urgency and seriousness of purpose.
15. The challenge is a mighty one, but the preconditions for progress exist—in fact, you have built them through your efforts over the past decade.
16. Ten years ago, we together created the Global Forum, which is now the backbone of inter-state understanding on migration.
 - The IOM has grown in size, sophistication, and importance under the leadership of Bill Swing.
 - Our collective efforts over three years led to migration’s inclusion in the SDGs, creating a fundamental stepping stone towards greater cooperation.
 - The GMG, together with the informal Quartet under the aegis of DSG Eliasson, have helped focus the efforts of the UN system.
 - Mini-multilateralism, meanwhile, has shown its value in efforts like the Migrants in Countries in Crisis Initiative, led so admirably by the US and the Philippines, and the Nansen Initiative.
 - And civil society and the private sector have stepped up their commitment, especially in the context of the current crises.
17. Now, however, we must translate all this institutional and rhetorical progress into meaningful, large-scale change in the lives of vulnerable migrants, refugees, and our communities writ large.
18. We have three main goals this year, in my view.
19. First, we must use this political moment to generate commitments to specific improvements in the international refugee protection system, and to reducing the vulnerabilities of all migrants.
20. The moment of truth will be on September 19th.

21. We must reach that day with a consensus on sharing responsibility for forced migrants. Supporting refugees is not optional. It is a shared, global responsibility.
22. No longer can we go from year to year, from crisis to crisis, begging for pledges—pledges that, as often as not, aren't as good as the paper they're written on.
23. Our ambition should be to define what it costs to support forced migrants and the countries that host them—as if we were doing our own family's budget—and to collectively generate the necessary funding. Not on a last-minute, year-to-year basis, but within the context of a long-term plan.
24. We also must expand our capacity to host refugees, through resettlement and through other legal pathways.
25. It is simply unacceptable that 10 countries take on the lion's share of the burden, that 86% of refugees reside in the developing world, and that fewer than 100,000 are resettled every year.
26. Most crucially, we need to help the world rethink the very idea of what a refugee is. No longer can they be seen and treated as deadweight in permanent camps, but instead supported to become vibrant, contributing members of our communities.
27. So our model must become one based on the full inclusion of refugees in our labor markets and schools, as soon as possible.
28. But our efforts cannot stop at refugees.
29. We need to agree on a set of commitments to reduce the vulnerabilities that all migrants face—from ensuring rescue at sea, to offering legal pathways to them, to providing legal identity for all. We also could vow, for instance, never to hold children in detention.
30. These are the kinds of goals to which states—and international organizations—should commit in September. And while full agreement won't be reached in all realms, a roadmap must be created and vouchsafed.
31. Second, the UN system absolutely must develop greater capacity on migration.
32. Migrants must have a voice within this house, as well as an agency robust enough to lead policy development and implementation.
33. I have no doubt that only IOM can play this role; it should be brought into the UN family on terms acceptable to its members.
34. Third, we must take this tool called the SDG's and make something of it—a blueprint for safe, productive mobility that helps migrants, their families, and their countries of origin to thrive, while defusing the xenophobic reactions that poison our politics.
35. This is not about deciding on an indicator or three. It is about defining a vision on which we can agree to deliver.

36. All the institutions I mentioned—the GFMD, the GMG and its constituent members, the IOM, civil society and the private sector—all will have a crucial role to play in delivering on these goals.
37. We need to determine a way to work together, to divide the labor, and to take advantage of every single hour and every single day this year.
38. I doubt that in my lifetime, in the next generation, we will ever again have the kind of public and political attention on our issues that we have right now.
39. We have worked hard over the years to create robust institutions full of potential—and now we must realize their potential. There is no time to waste.