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“Strengthening cooperation on migration and refugee
movements under the new development agenda”

Statement by
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Check against delivery

We warmly welcome today's very timely initiative by the Secretary General, as well as the inclusion of migration in the "2030 development agenda".

My country has been at the center of migratory flows for the last 25 years, with over two million migrants having arrived in Greece either transit or with the intention of staying.

Nevertheless the flows of the previous years are not comparable to those of the past few months: since the beginning of this year, more than 300.000 people originating from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq have crossed the Greek borders with Turkey and passed the Greek islands, on their way to European countries.

The vast majority of these people - over 80%- are refugees fleeing from war and conflicts.

These migratory flows have a cause: Wars and conflicts which - no matter what their internal causes are - we as a global community did not manage to resolve effectively.

There is no time for hesitation, particularly for Western partners whose decisions were so crucial in forming the fate of these countries.

We cannot afford to make foreign policy choices without taking in mind what their consequences will be.

In Europe many were surprised by this phenomenon, but, frankly, they shouldn't have been. Much poorer countries with far smaller populations have been facing even bigger challenges for a long time.

What we need now, is concrete actions:

First, the UN and the international community must **step up efforts for resolving the conflicts in Syria and Libya as well as confronting jihadism.**

We need diplomatic solutions, that include all important actors in the region. And we need these solutions to lay the foundations for national reconciliation.

Second, we must support the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and set-up and expand a **generous, robust resettlement mechanism** for refugees from Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan.

This will give hope to these people, preventing them from trusting dangerous trafficking networks.

Furthermore, we have to **support countries neighbouring Syria**, in taking-in these migrants and enhancing cooperation in **dismantling trafficking networks**.

In the EU, we took an important step in establishing a mechanism for the relocation of 160,000 refugees.

In cooperation with the European Commission and other international organizations, Greece is establishing the necessary infrastructure, including hotspots, to support this mechanism and improve migration management.

It is absolutely necessary that more is done on a European level, in terms of coordination, improving institutional capacities and increasing funding.

Greece is in the middle of three overlapping crises.

An economic crisis, a refugee crisis and a security crisis due to the instability in the surrounding region.

The way we deal with crises such as these, as countries, regions and as a global community, will be the measure of our success.

If we deal with them by bringing more destruction, by building higher walls and by increasing poverty and exclusion, we will lose.

If we manage- particularly here in the UN- to ensure security decisively but also inclusively, if we build a new growth oriented development model and if we deal with refugee and migration flows humanely and effectively, we will succeed.