



BRAZIL

High Level Meeting on Addressing Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants

Statement by H.E. Michel Temer

President of the Federative Republic of Brazil

19 September 2016

(Please check against delivery)

H.E. Mr. Peter Thomson, President of the Seventy-First Session of the General Assembly

H.E. Mr. Mogens Lyketoft, President of the Seventieth Session of the General Assembly

H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations

Honorable Heads of State, Heads of Government

Distinguished delegations, Ladies and gentlemen

Images of childhood cut short by conflict and terror have appalled the world. Lives lost in the pursuit of survival in other countries move us to reflect and, especially, to act.

Almost seventy years ago, this Assembly adopted a universal declaration of rights. It declared that every person who suffers persecution has the right to seek shelter in other countries. It is high time to translate this right into concrete measures.

This is the first time that this Assembly deals with matters related to refugees and migration together. We cannot close our eyes to the root causes of these two phenomena. Only negotiated solutions to political crises and inclusive development will prevent the forced displacement of large numbers of people.

Let us be clear: the flows of refugees are the result of wars, repression, and violent extremism – not their causes. The legitimate concerns of governments for the security of their citizens must respect the inherent rights of every human being. If we forfeit the resolute defense of those rights, we will be forfeiting our own

humanity. In our relations with foreigners, with others, we test our allegiance to these values, our commitment to civilization.

Brazil is a country built on the strength of millions of people from all continents. We value our diversity. Immigrants made – and continue to make – a significant contribution to our development. More than that, they are an essential part of our identity. In the Rio Olympics and Paralympics, we had the honor of welcoming the first delegation of refugees to compete in the Games.

In the last years, Brazil has welcomed more than 95,000 refugees from 79 different nationalities. We are fully aware that welcoming refugees is a shared responsibility. We are engaged in refugee resettlement initiatives in our region, with special attention to the needs of women and children. In our country, even before the recognition of their legal situation, refugees are given access to jobs and to public services, including education and health. And we work with the United Nations to ensure quick procedures for granting refugee status. We are also engaged with our Latin American brothers and sisters in several initiatives in favour of refugees.

In the Brazilian Parliament, a new bill on migration is in its final stages of consideration. Our goal is to guarantee rights, to foster inclusion and to avoid criminalizing migration. The new legislation will provide for humanitarian visas – a tool already used in the past in favour of almost 85,000 Haitian citizens after the 2010 earthquake, as well as in favour of nearly 2,300 people affected by the Syrian conflict. We are enhancing our migration policies. The fundamental respect for the dignity of all migrants lies at the centre of our national policies.

Presidents, Ladies and gentlemen

We live in times that require boldness and courage.

During World War II, Luiz Martins de Souza Dantas, then Brazilian Ambassador to Paris, took the initiative of issuing hundreds of visas to save the lives of European citizens fleeing Nazism. Souza Dantas acted out of a moral imperative, convinced that he was acting according to the values of Brazilian society. He was ahead of his time. We must be ahead of ours.

Thank you.