

ESTONIA

**Vabariigi Presidendi Toomas Hendrik Ilvese sõnavõtuks ÜRO
rändetippkohtumise plenaaristungil, 19.09.2016**

Mr. President,

Secretary General,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Estonia welcomes the unique initiative by the Secretary-General of the United Nations that for the very first time allows us, the entire international community, to discuss refugee and migration issues in a single UN-led framework.

It enables us to tackle the deficits of global governance on an issue that touches upon numerous policy areas with tremendous implications for security, stability and development around the world. It reminds us that the commitment and joint engagement by the international community has been there for many decades – to act in a spirit of human dignity and in co-operation with each other to help vulnerable people escaping from war and terror, from political or social persecution, from poverty and hunger.

But we need to commit to doing even more, and differently, especially in enhancing the protection of the most vulnerable – the children – who

have been forced to move across borders or who have been forcibly displaced within their home countries.

Around the world, the number of child refugees and migrants count for nearly 50 million today. In just 10 years, the number of child refugees has more than doubled and it continues to grow. This shocking statistic shows we need to commit to rapid change. It is our duty to make children's voices heard in the migration discussion and help them gain a foothold, protection, health and education – simply, a normal life.

Estonia is pays special attention to the plight of child refugees and migrants, and is working towards strengthening child protection and integration measures in European and national legislative frameworks and practices, including in the fields of education, health, social and legal services, as well as in promoting measures to combat discrimination and xenophobia.

Providing refugee and migrant children with an education, and giving them equal access to different fields of social life and public services helps us to build a safer and stronger society. Let me give some examples: 1) In the refugee camp in Zaatar, Jordan, Estonia equipped computer classes and provided computer lessons for primary school children in the camp. 2) Local governments in Estonia that have resettled Syrian refugees from Turkey or relocated refugees from Greece, have immediately ensured that all children, from the age of one and a half to

17, are in education, either in kindergarten, elementary or primary school.

We therefore believe that the practical steps and actions of Estonia, and of other European Union Member States, address the main concerns and suggestions laid out by UNICEF in its latest report on the Growing Crisis for Migrant and Refugee Children.

It is equally important to address the root causes of conflict, violence and extreme poverty in countries of origin of migration. In this context, the initiative of the European Union on a new Partnership Framework with Third Countries is more timely than ever. Tailor-made migration compacts with the countries of origin, which are developed and implemented in a spirit of mutual ownership, contribute eventually towards peaceful conflict resolution, towards advanced political, social and economic situation, towards a better life for everyone.

Thank you for your attention