



**STATEMENT BY
HIS EXCELLENCY DATO' SERI DR. AHMAD ZAHID HAMIDI
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER OF MALAYSIA
AT THE PLENARY SESSION OF THE HIGH-LEVEL MEETING ON LARGE MOVEMENTS
OF REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS**

NEW YORK, 19 SEPTEMBER 2016

Mr. Co-Chairs,

First and foremost, I would like to commend the initiative of the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon and the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in organising such a High Level Meeting to galvanise UN Member Countries efforts on the need for coordinated and complementary action on population movements and displacements.

Mr. Co-Chairs,

Migration has become and continues to be one of the important security challenges faced by Malaysia, either in the form of irregular/illegal and mixed migration flows. Irregular or illegal migration is a cross border flow of people who enter a country without the legal permission to do so while mixed migration flows are complex population movements including both voluntary and forced migrants. The most common forms of irregular or illegal migration are related to illegal labour migration, labour trafficking and/or sexual exploitation as well as those fleeing from persecution, discrimination, natural disasters, poverty and armed conflicts.

In the early 70s, Malaysia had faced the exodus of Vietnamese boat people into the country and finally they were successfully resettled in third countries with

the assistance of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Nonetheless, as of 31 July 2016 Malaysia is still hosting approximately 151,596 Persons of Concern (POC) comprising of asylum seekers and refugees from 54 countries though the term “refugee” is not being defined under any of our domestic legislation.

Despite not being a member of the 1951 Refugee Convention and 1967 Protocol, Malaysia has always rendered its humanitarian assistance to such cases without compromising on its sovereignty, integrity and security. However, I would like to take the opportunity to highlight the lingering problem pertaining to the resettlement of the existing refugee population in Malaysia to third countries which in certain circumstances might take years. This would adversely create economic, social, political and security problems to the country. In this regard, I would urge the UNHCR and other State Parties to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its related Protocol to give serious attention and promptly act on it.

Another teething problem pertaining to the existing refugee population in Malaysia is the genuinity of the UNHCR card issued to them. The way forward that I have mooted in my discussion with the UNHCR is the establishment of a Joint Task Force (JTF) between Malaysia and UNHCR for the registration and issuance of the UNHCR card embedded with additional security features. However, the refugee determination status is solely at the discretion of the UNHCR.

Mr. Co-Chairs,

Finally, I would strongly give my assurance that Malaysia would not neglect on its international obligations and commitments in addressing conflict induced migration caused by war, natural calamities, political unrest and armed conflicts. As pledged by the Hon. Prime Minister of Malaysia during the 70th UNGA Session last year for Malaysia to receive 3,000 Syrian migrants over a period of three (3) years due to the conflicts in Syria and Iraq, I am pleased to share at this august Summit that we have received 79 Syrian migrants (in two

(2) batches) by May 2016 and we look forward to receive another 421 Syrian migrants by year end. Previously, Malaysia had hosted 340 migrants from Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1997 to 2003 through a similar humanitarian commitment. This strongly reflects Malaysia's continuous devotion on this evolving issue.

I thank you, Mr. Co-Chairs.