

LATEST STATEMENTS

Stockholm, 14 May 2014 - Secretary-General's remarks at the opening ceremony of the Global Forum on Migration and Development in Sweden (as delivered)

Thank you for this opportunity to participate in this Global Forum on Migration and Development. I am grateful to the Government of Sweden for hosting this very important meeting in this very important timing when all Member States of the United Nations are working in shaping the post-2015 development agenda. I applaud Sweden's longstanding and constructive advocacy on this issue – and I count on Sweden to continue showing leadership long after this Forum ends.

Over the years, as migration has risen on the international agenda, this Forum has become an increasingly valuable space for dialogue, cooperation and confidence building.

More than one in thirty people on earth is a migrant. The phenomenon of migration affects all countries.

I have seen small villages in developing countries where young people leave to search for better opportunities.

I have seen fast-growing cities where skyscrapers are being built by the hard labour of migrants, and developed States where the contributions of migrants are helping to drive the economy.

We have worked hard together to seize the opportunities presented by migration, recognise its benefits and address the risks.

The General Assembly's High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development last year adopted a ground-breaking Declaration. I was especially encouraged that this was a consensus action. That is proof of the climate of trust you helped to create.

The Declaration clearly recognized that migration is one of the most crucial issues of our times.

Our communities have much to gain from migration when it is managed properly – and much to lose when it is not.

I call on all countries to rally around the common goal of creating regular, safe and orderly channels of migration. Together, we can show that when we promote and protect the human rights of migrants and their families, regardless of their migration status, we benefit all people around the world.

Last year I put forward an eight-point plan on migration. I called for protecting human rights, lowering the costs of migration, ending exploitation, helping stranded migrants, raising public awareness, integrating migration into the development agenda, which we are doing, gathering more reliable data, and enhancing partnerships.

It is important to ground all migration policies firmly in fundamental rights.

This means protecting migrant workers from discrimination, ensuring the rights of migrant domestic workers and protecting men, women and children from abuse.

I urge all States that have not done so to ratify and implement all international treaties related to migration.

All States should also ratify and implement the international instruments on fighting smuggling and trafficking in human beings. We can do more to strengthen national and regional anti-human trafficking policies and ensure that this crime is prevented and punished under the law, and that victims are protected.

Recent years have also seen the introduction of various initiatives to prevent exploitative practices and to reduce the price that migrants pay to unscrupulous recruiters. There are now also improved ways to properly channel remittances and cut their associated costs.

I remain seriously concerned about the crises unfolding in the Mediterranean and elsewhere. The loss of life is unacceptable. We must stop the loss of migrants' lives at sea and on land, wherever that may occur.

We have also sought to do more to alleviate the suffering of vulnerable migrants stranded in crisis situations – and respond to their desperate needs.

Thanks to the dedicated efforts of my Special Representative, Mr. Peter Sutherland, we now have a cooperative initiative aimed at providing concrete guidelines for migrants caught in countries in crisis.

I commend the United States and the Philippines for taking the lead in bringing together countries and stakeholders on this issue.

I am encouraged by these gains – but we must sustain this momentum.

Migration should be a journey of hope – not a perilous gamble in which migrants and their family members risk their lives and livelihoods. We must find concrete solutions.

I am especially concerned about the administrative detention of migrants, including very young children. These actions can impact negatively on the rights of migrants.

We must always stay true to universal values and not allow opportunists to divide societies by exploiting fear and hatred for political gain. Especially in times of high unemployment, we must be vigilant against the tendency to scapegoat migrants.

We also need to work more closely with non-governmental organizations, civil society and other partners to uphold the rights of migrants – including their right to decent working conditions and fair wages.

We must redouble our efforts to address negative stereotypes and combat discrimination of any kind.

Let us also strengthen our ability to monitor racist and xenophobic rhetoric and counter it with hard facts, understanding and tolerance.

Let us solidify our migration partnerships and cooperation at all levels. The Global Migration Group, which brings together the United Nations agencies and the International Organization for Migration, will work with the Global Forum, civil society, and others to advance our common goals.

We are entering a critical time, a new phase for migration. In the next few months, the Member States of the United Nations will finalize their report on the sustainable development goals. Your voices can impress upon those drawing up the post-2015 framework the great value of leveraging migration to generate economic, social and environmental progress.

With compassion, common sense and political will, we can better manage international migration in a coherent, comprehensive and balanced manner. We need to integrate the important links between migration and development in national and international policies. We must advocate for a human rights-based approach to migration policies and practices. All of this will generate great progress for migrants and society as a whole.

It is up to us, it is up to you, collectively, to optimize the benefits of migration – for those people crossing borders and for society as a whole. The current discussions on the post-2015 agenda provide us with an opportunity to shape a responsive approach to the challenges of migration.

I thank again the Government of Sweden for leading the Global Forum at this important time, and we look forward to this excellent work being continued under the chairmanship of Turkey later next year.

I count on this Stockholm Forum to jumpstart new initiatives, generate fresh ideas and forge innovative partnerships to realize this vision.

Thank you.

Let us work together, collectively, to make this world better for all, including everybody, men and women, migrants whether they are illegal or legal, to make this world better for all and put all of us onto a sustainable path.