

Remarks by

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

1. Allow me first to thank the President of the Security Council, Lithuania, for having invited me to address you.
2. A month ago, Deputy Secretary General Eliasson mobilized an informal group including High Commissioner Antonio Guterres, High Commissioner Zeid, IOM Director General William Swing, and myself.
3. As key players in the UN's response to the Mediterranean refugee and mixed migratory crisis, we have been meeting regularly to better coordinate among ourselves and have issued two joint statements that reflect our positions; I have consulted my colleagues ahead of this briefing.
4. In these brief remarks, I will lay out priorities for our collective response to the crisis. These are:
 - saving lives and safeguarding the human rights of refugees and migrants;
 - law enforcement actions against traffickers and smugglers;
 - radically increased safe avenues of refugee resettlement, family reunion, and labor migration;
 - greater solidarity with countries closer to conflicts;
 - and an intensified effort to end the conflicts and stem the development failures that have displaced more people today than at any point in history.
5. In addressing each of these challenges, the UN—UNHCR in particular for refugees—and the IOM have a crucial role to play.
6. But making the most effective use of our collective experience and operational capacity demands intensive dialogue amongst all of us—the UN, regional organizations, and governments, especially in source, transit, and destination countries.
7. The situation in the Mediterranean represents—first and foremost—a security crisis for the hundreds of thousands of refugees and migrants in harm's way: those risking their lives to cross the sea, those trapped and abused in transit countries, those fleeing conflicts, natural disasters, and other threats to their lives and livelihoods.
8. In the first 130 days of 2015, 1,800 people have drowned in the Mediterranean.
9. That total represents a 20-fold increase over the same period last year—and at

this pace, between 10,000 and 20,000 migrants would perish by autumn. It is a collective responsibility to act.

10. As they stand on the shores of N. Africa, having paid smugglers 5- or 10- or even 15,000 dollars for their passage—their life's savings and more—forced migrants know they face a substantial risk of death. But, clearly, the situations from which they flee are even more dangerous.
11. This is certainly true of Syrian refugees, who this year constitute about a third of those crossing the Mediterranean. But the thousands of Eritreans, Somalis, Afghans, and others who join them are hardly better off.
12. After rigorous assessments of their claims, it is essential to remember that about half of those who reach Europe qualify for international protection as refugees.
13. An effective strategy to address the crisis, including in the context of a Security Council resolution, begins with the immediate need to save lives.
14. If we do not frame our response in this way, it would represent a moral failure of the first order, one that would undermine international law and security.
15. Until recently—until, that is, 900 people died on a single weekend in April—the international community was largely absent from the Mediterranean. We left it primarily to the Italian navy, to ill-equipped merchant vessels, and to NGOs like the Migrant Offshore Aid Station to rescue migrants.
16. Since then, the situation has improved. The European Union has pledged to triple its resources in the Mediterranean. It must commit to search-and-rescue as its first priority with Operation Triton—which is still limited to operating within 35 kilometers of Italy's shore. It has just 6 vessels, in contrast to the 32 of Mare Nostrum. The Italian and Hellenic navies and coast guards, now joined by vessels from elsewhere, continue to stem the loss of life.
17. As a result, fewer refugees and migrants have died in recent days.
18. In parallel, Europe and Africa must develop a common strategy to deal with smugglers and traffickers. This will not be easy. It demands better governance and coordinated law enforcement efforts along the entire routes of migratory movements. Governments in Europe, but equally in Africa and the Middle East, must take their responsibilities seriously in this respect.
19. Organized criminal gangs are active from the Greater Middle East, sub-Saharan Africa, through N. Africa, and into Europe. No single actor, no single tactic, can ensure that they are arrested, prosecuted, and imprisoned.
20. The stakes for them are high—moving people illegally across borders is today more lucrative than the sale of illicit arms or drugs.
21. It will take a coordinated, comprehensive effort—one built on mutual trust—to counter this threat.
22. Some draw comparisons to the successful anti-piracy operations off the Horn of Africa. But the calculus in the Mediterranean is far more complex, with innocent refugees—including many children—in the line of fire between smugglers and any potential military operations.
23. All enforcement measures will have to adhere to international human rights, humanitarian, maritime, and refugee law.

24. Even if there is success in thwarting the smugglers, however, we will have created a new and equally pernicious problem.
25. We will have trapped asylum seekers and migrants in some countries without access to protection, education, healthcare, or livelihoods.
26. As we ramp up anti-smuggling and counter-trafficking efforts, we must radically increase our capacity to provide protection for those in need. This will serve to disrupt the business model of the smugglers. It demands action on numerous fronts.
27. The entire international community must accept a fair share of the refugee burden.
28. Small countries like Lebanon and Jordan are hosting together over 1.8 million refugees from Syria. In Lebanon's case, this represents almost a quarter of its population. Half of these refugees are children; the majority of them are not now in school.
29. That is a real crisis. The equivalent would be for the EU, with a population of 500 million, to offer protection to 125 million asylum seekers. Last year, in fact, the EU gave international protection to about 300,000 people.
30. What should we do? Refugee resettlement and other forms of humanitarian admission are the safest, most organized means we have of providing protection. They are underused tools.
31. We need more resettlement countries. We need larger resettlement quotas. Only half of the 28 EU Member States are resettlement countries.
32. We need to provide other options to asylum seekers, too: humanitarian visas, temporary protective status, and short-term visas.
33. For the doctors, professors, and engineers among them—as well as for the nurses, construction workers, and others with skills our countries need—we could offer labor visas, seasonal visas, and circular migration visas. Family reunification is another very important right to be actively facilitated.
34. We have barely deployed these life-saving tools.
35. We also must establish safe ways for asylum seekers to pursue these legal avenues.
36. Meanwhile, we need to offer far more aid to countries close to conflict zones, to ensure the safety of refugees and migrants, educate their children, and offer real hope for the future.
37. It is also important to highlight the responsibility of those countries where inequality, dysfunctional governance, and poverty drive people to migrate. They need to be accountable toward their own citizens and create conditions where everyone can benefit from economic and social advancement.
38. And, in order to maintain the integrity of the international protection system, it will be essential that any comprehensive plan include return agreements regarding people not in need of international protection.
39. I understand that the European Commission this week will approve a “European Agenda on Migration” that will promote many of these ideas for safer access to

more channels of legal migration.

40. My colleagues and I applaud such smart, progressive measures and expect that the EU will adopt them with due speed and at the scale that they deserve. I believe that the proposals, when implemented, will provide a significant and positive augmentation of the EU response to the crisis, and this is to be welcomed.
41. Even if we achieve all of this, however, we will not have addressed the larger problems we face. We speak of root causes, but what we really need are root solutions.
42. It is easy enough to turn away from troubles that seem intractable—conflicts that go on for years on end, authoritarian governments that abuse their citizens, demographic challenges that seem to grow exponentially.
43. But every problem, broken down, can be ameliorated.
44. At the most basic level, we need to engage in a systematic, intense dialogue among countries of origin, transit, and destination—a structured conversation informed by evidence-based policy solutions. We have done it before, in Indochina and elsewhere. We must sit together and persist until we find a comprehensive answer.
45. The UN stands ready to help foster, inform, and guide such a dialogue.
46. There is much more we can do, too.
47. We can recognize, for instance, the real demands on our labor markets by expanding the legal channels to migrate for work under fair conditions, instead of silently condoning the exploitation of migrant workers.
48. And, looking at more sustainable solutions, we must include migrants and refugees in the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda.
49. The UN system, IOM, and civil society organizations already are contributing in so many ways to mitigating the crisis in the Mediterranean, and they stand ready to do much more.
50. Thank you.

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