

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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**REMARKS AT OPENING SESSION OF HIGH-LEVEL PLENARY MEETING TO  
ADDRESS LARGE MOVEMENTS OF REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS  
New York, 19 September 2016**

Distinguished heads of State and Government,  
Your Excellency Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, President of the General Assembly's seventieth session,  
Your Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson, President of its seventy-first session,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

Today's Summit represents a breakthrough in our collective efforts to address the challenges of human mobility.

More people than ever are on the move. Some flee war; others seek opportunity.

Refugees and migrants are not to be seen a burden; they offer great potential, if only we unlock it.

We must place the human rights of all refugees and migrants at the heart of our commitments.

When we translate the New York Declaration which we adopt here today into reality:

More children can attend school.

More workers can securely seek jobs abroad, instead of being at the mercy of criminal smugglers.

And more people will have real choices about whether to move once we end conflict, sustain peace and increase opportunities at home.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development advances those goals.

The Declaration we will adopt today rallies all partners around collective commitments:

To protect the human rights of all refugees and migrants, regardless of their status.

To increase support for the hardest-hit countries.

To assist despairing people in protracted crises.

To ensure that children get an education.

To improve search and rescue operations.

And to boost humanitarian funding and resettlement of refugees.

Also today, we will formally bring the International Organization for Migration, IOM, into the United Nations system. This will further strengthen our collective response.

We must change the way we talk about refugees and migrants. And we must talk with them. Our words and dialogue matter.

That is why today, the United Nations is launching a new campaign called “Together – Respect, Safety and Dignity for All.”

Acting together, we can respond to rising xenophobia and turn fear into hope.

I call on world leaders to join this campaign and commit together to upholding the rights and dignity of everyone forced by circumstance to flee their homes in search of a better life.

This summit shows that we can find common ground.

But the summit will have real meaning only if we all honour the promises made here today.

With courageous actions to implement the New York Declaration, we will ensure that no refugee or migrant is left behind.

Thank you.