

AUSTRIA



**High-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly on
addressing large movements of refugees and migrants**

**Statement by
H. E. Christian Kern
Federal Chancellor of the Republic of Austria**

New York 19 September 2016

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. Secretary General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me first thank the Secretary General and the UN for organizing today's event on refugees and migration, the most pressing issues of our time. Like others, also Austria has been facing **large migration over the past years**, most of them refugees from crisis regions and most of them using irregular routes. We have seen that one of the richest regions in the world, namely the European Union, is struggling to cope with this phenomenon – indeed we have seen that it has the potential to politically destabilize one of the most stable regions in the world. Austria with its long-lasting tradition of coping with huge inflows of refugees – not least due to its location in the heart of Europe – is no exception to that.

While migration overall should be and can be mutually beneficial, we also recognize in our declaration that **forced displacement and irregular migration can present complex challenges** also to the recipient countries.

So how to deal with this?

First of all, there can be no doubt that **we have to stay firm on our commitment to respect fundamental human rights and international human rights law** also when dealing with irregular migration. However, irregular migration poses huge risks for the migrants themselves. Thousands of migrants have lost their lives over the past years on their dangerous routes to Europe, smugglers ruthlessly exploit people in need, and often migrants strand in camps without adequate provision of food, shelter and basic medical care.

So we have to stop irregular migration in the interest of both migrants and recipient countries.

Austria will host a regional summit meeting on the 24th of September in Vienna to discuss closer cooperation and coordination between the countries along the Balkan route.

While we have to close irregular routes, we have to open legal routes at the same time in order to save lives. For example, resettlement schemes, as already practiced and administered by UNHCR provide such routes and we should make a common effort to make them work effectively.

We are aware that not only Europe is affected by migration. Therefore, we would like to commend the efforts of those **countries hosting very large communities of refugees** in direct **proximity to long-lasting conflicts**.

Our New York declaration adopted here today is very clear about the fact that **no single nation can solve this problem**, so that all of us have to do their fair share in this regard – both in the spirit of solidarity and in our own interest.

But all this will not be enough, because in the longer term the only sustainable and most effective way to solve the problem is to solve it in the regions of origin.

That is, **we have to fight the root causes of migration** that are conflicts, climate change, and the lack of opportunities increasingly caused by economic divergence across and within nations. These are the challenges we have to respond to.

We have to increase our efforts in crisis resolution, as clearly effective crisis resolution is a precondition for any further development. Here, of course the United Nations play a key role.

We have to increase our efforts in fighting **climate change**, that is, we have to follow up on the **Paris Agreement** that could be the turning point in global climate policy. And we have to act together in order to create opportunities for people, in particular for the young, where currently there are none.

Mr. Secretary General, Excellencies, in the spirit of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, let us work together so that **no one will be left behind**.

Thank you.