

PHILIPPINE STATEMENT
delivered by
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**UNITED NATIONS SUMMIT
FOR ADDRESSING LARGE MOVEMENTS
OF REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS**
19 September 2016
UN Headquarters, New York

Mr. President of the General Assembly;
Excellencies;
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon!

The Philippines welcomes the Political Declaration of the High Level Summit on Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants and its Annexes titled, "Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework" and "Towards a Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration."

Mr. President,

The Philippines has approximately 10 million of its citizens working or living overseas.

For this reason, the protection of the rights and promotion of the welfare of Filipinos overseas, and recognizing them as active partners in national development, is one of the deepest and most sacred commitments of Philippine foreign policy.

During the negotiations for the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, the Philippines strongly advocated recognizing the positive contribution of migrants to inclusive growth and sustainable development in source, transit and destination countries.

We likewise ensured the promotion and protection of the human rights of all migrant workers, regardless of migration status. We also sought to include migrants in the list of vulnerable groups. In all cases, migrants' needs must be addressed by the Agenda with the view that they be empowered.

Therefore, we have developed the Guidelines on Migrants in Countries in Crisis (MICIC), jointly with the United States, our co-chair, other partners, and the International Organization of Migration (IOM).

The Guidelines provides best practices and principles in addressing the needs of migrants in case of any crisis - whether caused by conflict or natural disasters – in their host country. The Guidelines emphasize that protecting migrants in vulnerable situations is a shared responsibility among the sending, destination and even transit states.

This Summit is a critical step, first, in dealing with the negative perceptions of migrants, who at one time or another are gripped by both xenophobia and fear, or affected by intolerance – caused by a lack of understanding of others. Second, the Summit restores the focus on the role of migrants as a positive force for sustainable development.

The Summit is also a landmark event in strengthening the governance framework of international migration.

We look forward to engaging stakeholders through the process of intergovernmental negotiations, which will finally lead to the adoption of Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in 2018. This process must begin soonest.

Mr. President,

With the same earnestness, we welcome the adoption of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework.

The Philippines has always kept its doors open to refugees seeking asylum. In years past, we granted asylum to the Russians in the 1920's, the Jews, as well as Spanish and Chinese in the 1930's. In recent years, we welcomed to our shores Vietnamese, Cambodians, and Lao people from the 1970s to the '90s.

For the Philippines, the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol are the cornerstones of international law on refugee protection. We thus reaffirm our commitment to the goals of the Convention and its Protocol. We also support the 1954 Convention on Stateless Persons.

We will sustain our support for the Emergency Transit Mechanism (ETM), a cooperation arrangement with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the IOM. The ETM provides for the immediate evacuation of refugees who are at risk of *refoulement*¹ and persecution from their countries of origin.

We continue to support the UNHCR. Through institutional coordination at global level, we can ably address the refugees crisis and provide effective and lasting solutions. Our support have come in the form of financial contributions since 1980, aside from country-specific humanitarian assistance programmes.

¹ (*rə'fōlmän*) The forcible return of refugees or asylum seekers to a country where they are liable to be subjected to persecution

Always, we recognize the crucial role of regional processes within the ASEAN the region. That is why we have been supporting the ASEAN Trust Fund, which addresses the case of irregular movements of persons in the Andaman Sea and the Bay of Bengal.

We also support and value the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime.

Mr. President,

This Summit is neither isolated nor insulated from the observant eyes of media and the rest of the world. They watch as we act together for the cause of millions of refugees in large movements and migrants. Almost without any choice, these migrants are pinning their hopes for a predictable future on us. Surely, we represent a positive force in in their lives.

We are interconnected as people in this world marked by conflict and peace. Since time immemorial, some people leave their countries to seek a better future, to escape an intolerable situation, or to break away from the cycle of poverty and oppression in their countries of their birth.

Our answer to their needs to live their lives all over again is to secure their journey and their destination.

We thus fulfill the worthy goals of the United Nations Charter, which states: "Affirm the dignity and worth of the human person" and "to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom."

We must not fail those who need us most in their most trying times. Our actions will affirm our solidarity and common humanity with refugees anywhere around the world.

Thank you. ***