



STATEMENT

BY

**HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZIMBABWE,
COMRADE R.G. MUGABE, ON THE
OCCASION OF THE HIGH LEVEL MEETING
OF THE UNGA ON LARGE MOVEMENTS OF
REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS: NEW YORK,
19TH SEPTEMBER, 2016.**

Your Excellency, Mr Peter Thomson, President of the 71st
Session of the General Assembly,
Your Excellencies, Heads of State and Government,
Your Excellency, Mr Ban Ki Moon, Secretary General of
the United Nations,
Distinguished Delegates,
Comrades and Friends.

Over the past year, we have witnessed harrowing images of refugees risking their lives to flee the dire realities in their countries of origin. We have been equally shocked at the hostile reception refugees have often been subjected to.

Against this background, we are pleased at the convening of this important meeting that allows us to explore a collective blueprint for dealing with large movements of refugees and migrants. We are also pleased that the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants highlights the importance of addressing the root cause of the large movements.

Mr President,

The movement of people from one place to another is not a new phenomenon at all. Migration has been a fact of life from time immemorial. However, it is the magnitude and the highly interconnected nature of our world today that makes this an unprecedented phenomenon.

While this very interconnectedness has been viewed with some apprehension in some quarters, we are convinced that it gives us an opportunity to come together and forge sustainable strategies in a much more effective manner than could have been done in our previously unconnected world. Indeed how we choose to address the issue of large movements of refugees and migrants will have a significant bearing on the realization of our collective goals as enshrined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This is why today's meeting and the outcomes it has adopted are so critical.

Mr President,

We have noted that a large portion of refugees that have landed on European shores originated from countries in armed conflict such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria. We therefore are convinced that a return to the UN Charter ideals of saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war and refraining from using armed force, is critical in addressing the root cause of large movements of refugees. Apart from natural disasters, large scale movements are in great measure a result of direct acts of commission and omission by human kind.

Consequently, therefore, more effort must be exerted towards peaceful settlement of disputes under Chapter VI of the UN Charter. More often than not, member states have been too keen to resort to force without exhausting peaceful means. This hegemonic military doctrine and adventurism, fuelled by a desire to achieve the narrow national interests of a powerful few, is at the root of the proliferation of armed conflicts which have spawned so many refugees today.

Mr President,

Some recent efforts to combat terrorism have tended to trample down upon the rights of migrant communities and refugees. While states have a legitimate right to take appropriate measures to protect their citizens from terrorism, there is great risk of mimicking the very same terrorist scourge, should we in the process disregard and unwantonly violate their fundamental rights.

Agenda 2030 recognises the positive contribution of migrants to inclusive growth and sustainable development. As we gain traction in the implementation of that Agenda, we should therefore be wary of a rising tendency by some unscrupulous individuals to stoke the fires of xenophobia and promote a negative narrative of migrants for political expediency. We have a collective responsibility to change that narrative on migrants and migration in our countries. Many countries owe some of the success in business and scientific prowess to the invaluable contributions of migrants and refugees.

We commend those states that have, despite their own limitations, opened their borders to migrant communities. We in Zimbabwe have hosted many refugees from conflict affected countries. We call for a balanced focus on the humanitarian plight of migrants and refugees world over. It is our sincere hope that the implementation of the Declaration we have adopted today will culminate in a comprehensive and sustainable collective response to this shared challenge and promote burden sharing.

We are also encouraged by the adoption of the two annexes that seek to take us towards a comprehensive refugee response framework and a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration. As we move towards operationalizing these frameworks, we call for continued adherence to the principles of national ownership and leadership above all else.

I thank you.

RGM/jm