

STATEMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT LAW ORGANIZATION

HIGH-LEVEL PLENARY MEETING ON ADDRESSING LARGE MOVEMENTS OF REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

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Mr. Chairperson,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

As the head of the world's only intergovernmental organization exclusively devoted to advancing the rule of law and development, I am honored to address this high level meeting of the General Assembly.

We need no reminder of the urgency of the refugee and migration crises or the intensity of human suffering. What we do need to recall is that their plight is a direct consequence of the failure to uphold the rule of law and human rights, the failure of institutions to protect and of the powerful to muster the political will to find solutions.

Men, women and children are endangering their lives to flee persecution, war and poverty and find a new future for themselves. But in exile or abroad, they encounter inequality and injustice. They are neither able to return home in safety or integrate in new societies with dignity and rights.

Sadly, refugees and migrants are being demonized and criminalized for short term political gains. In far too many countries, citizens' fears are being manipulated to create a climate of suspicion, mistrust, xenophobia, and racism. Far too often those fleeing terror are being deliberately confused with those who suspected of generating terror.

Just because refugees and migrants do not have documents, it does not mean they do not have rights. The rule of law - properly understood and applied - ensures that all people are equal and entitled to equal protection, no matter who they are or where, uprooted or at home.

Refugee and migration issues do not operate in a legal vacuum. The conventions and treaties, norms and laws are well-established - but not well-respected. There are huge gaps in commitment, compliance and capacity.

The New York Declaration is an important and timely reminder that the international legal framework, constructed with great care over the past century provides a solid basis for protecting the rights of people on the move and for finding solutions to their plight. The legal architecture provides the foundation on the basis of which the two distinct Global Compacts for refugees and migrants must be constructed.

The New York Declaration is the first step - what follows will be critical. As the international community moves forward to elaborate the Global Compacts, IDLO wishes to underline three key points:

- Firstly, there must be no compromise on the rule of law. Short changing legal norms today will only store up problems for the future.
- Secondly, development and humanitarian assistance must work in tandem, not in sequence, to help support people on the move at a much earlier stage. False lines make no sense in a world where borders can no longer hold people back, where globalization is creating new opportunities and threats that require global responses.
- Thirdly, investing in the rule of law is an integral part of sustainable development, as the 2030 Agenda has made clear. By strengthening institutions, the rule of law ensures justice and accountability. By empowering people, it helps to build resilient societies. The more the governments and the international community invest in the rule of law, the better equipped they will be to protect and assist refugees, migrants and displaced persons.

The marriage between the UN and IOM acknowledges the need for new thinking and new partnerships. The rule of law provides an opportunity for the UN, IOM and Member States to be bold and innovative while remaining rights-centered and people focused. IDLO stands ready to work with you to identify solutions that protect and empower refugees, migrants and displaced persons.

The International Development Law Organization (IDLO) enables governments and empowers people to reform laws and strengthen institutions to promote peace, justice, sustainable development and economic opportunity.