

SPEECH BY TURKEY

Esteemed co-chairs,

Distinguished participants,

I would like to thank co-chairs and all participants for their interest and efforts. Turkey attaches importance to the outcome of this session.

Over the course of history, Turkish people have embraced those fleeing from war and persecution, in Balkans and Middle East, and those displaced in Africa and Asia.

As a result of this culture, today we are hosting 3 million Syrians and Iraqis escaping from the violent conflict in their countries. Despite all challenges, our open door policy is still in force, while the principle of non-refoulement is well-respected.

In the face of large movements, we agree with the need for a comprehensive response to address large movements of people more effectively and predictably, and strengthen the contributions that refugees and migrants make to host communities.

In this framework, we recognize the role UN High Commissioner for Refugees plays in alleviating the sufferings of Syrians. In Turkey, our cooperation with the UNHCR from the onset of the crisis in Syria had been an important one.

Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP), developed by the national authorities as well as the UN agencies in the context of humanitarian crisis in Syria, is a late but a useful attempt.

Unfortunately, financing of this plan grossly falls short of the needs. Only 39% of the 843 million USD envisaged in 3RP for Turkey in 2016 is financed as of today.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The New York Declaration we adopt today contains number of important commitments for refugees and their hosts. I would like to highlight two areas where much greater response and cooperation is essential.

First, investing in the education of refugee children is truly critical. Often bulk of the refugees who fled their homes are women and children. Access to education is fundamentally important. However host countries alone cannot provide the educational needs of those fleeing.

Today in Turkey, there are nearly one million school-age Syrian children. Only 300.000 of them are provided with education. Immediate needs of the rest are additional schools and teachers. This can only be achieved if the international

community starts perceiving education in emergencies as an investment to our collective peace and security. There should be “No Lost Generation” in Syria or elsewhere. Equipping children with educational skills to rebuild their lives, will in turn help them rebuild their societies.

Second, increasing the number of legal pathways and strengthening resettlement to third countries is of vital importance. Global resettlement figures are nowhere near what is necessary. The Geneva Conference organized by the UNHCR earlier in March has not generated new commitments that will reach the targets set by UNHCR.

We need to look at this issue differently. Acknowledging the positive contribution of refugees and sensitizing the public opinion would be essential to reverse the current negative attitude towards refugees. This could enable the policy makers and other segments of the society to look at resettlement with a different view point.

On resettlement, the agreement we reached with the EU in March in order to stem irregular crossings in the Aegean Sea can serve as a stunning example. The one for one mechanism within the agreement which has foreseen the resettlement of Syrians under temporary protection in Turkey deserves special attention.

Since the activation of the agreement, as of 4 April, within that mechanism we have resettled more than 1.500 Syrians in the EU. This is crucial not only to convert the Aegean into a safe route towards Europe, but also to show potential migrants that they can legally reach the EU and bring an economic added value.

Burden and responsibility sharing is above all for our own future. As long as we do not equip refugees with life-sustaining tools and not create legal routes of migration, the vicious circle of crisis, displacement and instability will be persistent. Therefore, we should join our forces to transform the challenge of migration to an opportunity. By doing so, the burden should be spread equitably and not left to the shoulders of the neighboring countries.

Thank you.