



PERMANENT MISSION OF CUBA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

315 Lexington Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10016 (212) 689-7215, FAX (212) 689-9073

**STATEMENT BY H.E. Mr. ABELARDO MORENO FERNÁNDEZ, DEPUTY MINISTER OF
FOREIGN AFFAIRS AT THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE HIGH-LEVEL MEETING ON
ADDRESSING LARGE MOVEMENTS OF MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES**

71 UNGA – 19 September 2016

Mr. President,

Over the last two years, shocking images have been seen which show movements of desperate people crossing the Mediterranean en route to Europe, as a direct consequence of the destabilization actions of NATO in Middle Eastern and North African countries, and the persistent underdevelopment and poverty in the countries of the African continent.

There has been a movement of almost two million people, including 260,000 in the current year until the month of August. It is overwhelming to learn that over 30% are children, and that many of them travel alone; 17,000 have disappeared from 2015 to last May after setting foot on European soil; and 3,166 have died or disappeared at sea only until last August, which amounts to nearly 3,770 deaths in 2015.

The major promoters of these movements must take on their responsibility for the humanitarian catastrophe that has been generated.

Those who have escaped and are escaping from misery and conflicts sparked by others cannot be treated now as animals in the borders of the “civilized” countries which they intend to enter or be regarded as “de facto” criminals or potential terrorists.

These mass arrivals will not be held back by criminalizing them, building enormous walls in borders, detention camps or creating administrative and even military barriers. It is also incongruous that those who refuse to provide shelter today forget

that many of their citizens needed protection in other countries during the two world wars.

Mr. President,

Facing this multiplied number of asylum-seekers and refugees demands genuine responsibility to international peace and security by the major industrialized countries, as well as the renunciation to their hegemonic interests.

It also requires to substantially modifying the unjust and exclusive international economic order, which is equally vital to address the reasons why millions of people emigrate every year, even risking their lives in search of higher standards of living and increased wellbeing.

The migratory movements will persist if the 836 million people currently living in extreme poverty or the 795 million people starving, basically in the third world, continue to be doomed to this situation. In addition, why does the developed world close its eyes to the substantial contribution received from migrants to achieve its current standard of living, while the latter are victims of economic, cultural and social discrimination?

Mr. President,

International cooperation is therefore vital, ensuring genuine dialogue and collaboration, recognizing the shared responsibility of all States in the field of migration, and respecting the sovereignty and equality of all States and other foundations of the UN Charter, as well as the integrity, dignity and wellbeing of migrants.

However, there are actions by some States that run counter to this type of cooperation. Such is the case of the so called "Cuban Adjustment Act" and the "wet-foot-dry-foot" policy, implemented by the United States against Cuba. Moreover, there is a continued use of the "parole" program, an outrageous brain drain encouraging health workers to leave the country, in such emblematic sector both in Cuba and for the cooperation provided by my country to the peoples of the world.

The Adjustment Act provides Cubans with a preferential and unique migratory treatment worldwide, by automatically admitting to U.S. territory those arriving in an irregular manner in violation of bilateral migratory agreements aimed at ensuring a legal, safe and orderly migration.

The “wet-foot-dry-foot” policy ensures the implementation of the “Cuban adjustment” to migrants who manage to set foot on U.S. soil, while those who are intercepted at sea are returned to their country of origin. While victimizing migrants who fall in the hands of gangs of human traffickers, together with the safety risks involved, this policy creates difficulties for transit countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, a group of which has officially requested the U.S. government to derogate this policy.

These are, therefore, an incentive for human smuggling and irregular migration directly from the Cuban territory and also from third countries, including Cuban citizens who legally travel abroad. These policies have caused death and misfortune, and are discriminatory to migrants from any other country.

Mr. President,

This meeting will produce tangible outcomes only if commitments are undertaken in order to solve the major causes originating migration and refugee flows; if it goes beyond trying to hold back these movements; and if solidarity and cooperation are strengthened.

Thank you very much