

19 November 2015

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft,
President of the 70th Session of the General Assembly,
At the Informal Meeting of the UN General Assembly to Consider
Ways to Advance a Comprehensive Response to the Global
Humanitarian and Refugee Crisis**

Honorable Ministers, Mr Deputy Secretary General, Excellencies, distinguished guests, you are all very welcome to this important informal meeting on the Global Humanitarian and Refugee Crisis.

Three weeks ago, I decided to convene today's meeting. I did so for two specific reasons. First, because over 60 million of our world's most vulnerable people – more than half of whom children – have been forced from their homes and are in desperate need of our assistance. And second, because thus far, the response from the international community has been ad-hoc and inadequate. Collectively, we have failed to summon the political courage and provide the financial resources needed to meet our moral obligations to these people.

On your desks, you will see a small box through which you can watch a short film about one of these people: Sidra, a twelve year old girl who has fled her home in Syria due to the ongoing crisis. Having watched this video myself, I recommend it highly as it really brings home just how difficult life can be for a refugee in our world today.

Our meeting, however, is an opportunity to help refugee like Sidra, an opportunity to identify key actions to advance a more comprehensive and proportionate response to the overall global humanitarian and refugee crisis. Many of the issues raised will be directly relevant to tomorrow's formal meeting which will focus on the tragedies in the Mediterranean basin with specific emphasis on Syrian asylum seekers.

A comprehensive response to this global crisis requires action over the short, medium and long term – action that meets immediate needs, tackles key drivers of forced displacement, and addresses the root causes.

Chief among the actions needed is reaching political settlements to on-going conflicts around the world. Earlier today, the UN Special Envoy for Syria described signs of progress emerging from the talks between the members of the International Syria Support Crisis, and it is absolutely essential that that progress is built upon in the coming months.

Recent terrorist attacks perpetrated against innocent civilians have shocked, saddened and outraged us all. They have spread a sense of fear and insecurity far beyond those regions where the terrorist groups are notionally based. The international community must respond in a unified manner – those behind these attacks must be brought to justice and each of us must work to address the root causes of such violent extremism.

Let me be clear, however, that in no way do those attacks reduce the moral and legal obligations of the international community towards displaced people. On the contrary, they serve to underline even further why so many people are risking their lives to secure international protection and why we – the international community – must not fail them, for a second time.

Resolving conflicts, preventing violent extremism and supporting long-term development are central aspects of this comprehensive response, but for today's meeting, I have proposed that we focus on three other crucial issues.

First, we will look closely at what additional steps can be taken to provide protection to those who have been forcibly displaced. Over 4640 refugees and migrants have died already this year – 72% of whom died in the Mediterranean region. Millions of refugees are struggling to access legal protection and many countries on the front lines are struggling to respond to major influxes. Human rights protection must be reinforced. Third country resettlement and the principle of equity must be a part of this discussion yet in 2014 only 15% of global resettlement needs were met.

Second, we will discuss how to ensure predictable and adequate financing for humanitarian action. We will hear about the needs and the significant financing gaps. We must find ways to fill those gaps, to expand the pool for humanitarian financing and to improve resource predictability. We must also bring greater coherence and effectiveness to humanitarian action, all of which can contribute to the discussions leading to the World Humanitarian Summit next May.

Finally, we will discuss how best to enhance the support that is provided to those countries bearing the greatest burden in this global crisis. We must look at the different aspects of the challenges these countries are facing, and consider how best to alleviate the pressures that they are under.

These, I feel, are three areas where this short meeting can add real value. We must, however, move beyond discussions about the challenges and identify tangible actions and clear steps that governments, the UN system and others key stakeholders can take over the coming months. I am engaging closely with the Secretary-General in this regard and stand ready to help move matters forward as required.

Today, we are joined by a number of panellists who can begin to help us identify those tangible actions. I have asked them to be short and to the point and I encourage you all to engage freely and frankly in this meeting.

Thank you.