

20 November 2015

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft,  
President of the 70<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly,  
At the Meeting of the General Assembly on Agenda Item 130: “Global  
awareness of the tragedies of irregular migrants in the Mediterranean  
basin, with specific emphasis on Syrian asylum seekers”**

Honorable Ministers, Mr Secretary General, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, this meeting seeks to shed light on one of the most pressing humanitarian situations in our world today.

As we speak, states bordering the Mediterranean basin are faced with unprecedented movements of migrants and refugees. Since January, over **881,057** by both land and sea routes. 880,000 refugees and migrants have arrived in Europe by land and sea routes. The great majority of these people are fleeing conflict, violence, persecution and human rights violations, yet a number of them have become victims for a second time due to migrant smuggling and human trafficking. Even more tragically, over 3500 of them have already died en route this year.

The case of over 12 million displaced Syrian men, women and children deserves special attention, as does that of the neighbours of Syria —Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq—and other countries in the region who have been bearing the brunt of the crisis since its very beginning.

As the letter from the Permanent Representative of Turkey relating to this meeting stated so well: ‘It is neither possible nor just to expect those neighbours, or other countries in the region that host large numbers of displaced persons, asylum seekers and refugees, to face the migratory pressures and the risks and threats alone.’

Clearly, the situation in the Mediterranean affects countries in Europe, North Africa and the Middle East, in East and West Africa and in the Horn of Africa, in different ways. But its resolution requires a collective response from the international community encompassing different policies and measures, ranging from the protection of human rights, to humanitarian and development cooperation; from institution building to security and justice.

Many states have sought to respond in a manner consistent with the values of this Organization but it is clear that several, both those hosting large numbers of refugees and those receiving large influxes, are struggling under the heavy burden. Fear has naturally increased in light of the recent wave of terrorist attacks perpetrated by Daesh, but we must not allow that fear to turn to prejudice, irrationality or xenophobia. During such moments, Governments must lead by example, by meeting their moral and legal obligations thereby demonstrating to the world that compassion and unity will ultimately always trump hatred and division.

This was a key message from yesterday's informal meeting on the broader global humanitarian and refugee crisis. That meeting focussed on three issues of direct relevance to today's meeting.

On protection, there were calls for priority to be given to the most vulnerable displaced persons particularly women and children; for action to be taken to secure access to education and health care for displaced people; for the integrity of the refugee system to be respected and for third country resettlement to be seen as a central part of humanitarian response.

On financing, there was much discussion about what can be done to fill the current financing gap including by facilitating the mobilisation of more resources from traditional donors, the private sector, innovative instruments and new donors. The need for multi-annual planning and financing; and the provision of non-earmarked funding was also highlighted as crucial. Many however are also demanding more efficient humanitarian action and greater harmonization across the humanitarian and development community. There was considerable focus also on the links between development and fragility and a reminder that meeting our new 2030 Agenda will require action in all countries, particularly in conflict affected countries where over 30% of the world's poorest reside. At the same time, countries were encouraged to meet their commitment to 0.7%GNI in official development assistance and, thereby ensuring that adequate resources are available for both humanitarian and development needs.

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Finally, on the need to support those countries currently shouldering the greatest burden in this crisis, there were also strong statements of support from other member states, from the UN System and the World Bank. It was clear that resettlement and greater financing would ease the pressure somewhat, but that overall, there is a need to adapt humanitarian and development responses to the fact that most of these countries are middle-income countries and that most of

these crises are not short-term in nature but protracted and exist along-side traditional development challenges.

Excellencies, I look forward to hearing your views on these and other issues relating to this Agenda Item. I stand ready to support you however I can, so that the international community advances a more comprehensive response to the situation in the Mediterranean, Syria and elsewhere in the weeks and months ahead.

Thank you.