

18 May 2016

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft,  
President of the 70<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly,  
At the opening of the event ‘Large Movements of Refugees and  
Migrants: Critical Challenges for Sustainable Urbanization’**

Deputy Secretary-General Eliasson, Vice-President Jurgenson, Under Secretary-General Clos, Assistant-Secretary General Puri, Mayor Moustache Belle, ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon to you all.

It is a pleasure to address this event on behalf of the President of the General Assembly, His Excellency Mr Mogens Lykketoft, who is on official travel at this time.

I congratulate the Mission of Italy and all those who have helped to organize this event.

It is both extremely timely and extremely necessary.

It is timely because during the coming months, in Istanbul next week, New York in September and Quito in October, member states have an opportunity to put some meat on the bones of commitments they made in the 2030 Agenda – to bring about more inclusive and sustainable cities and urban areas; and to ensure safe, orderly and regular migration and full respect for the human rights of migrants, refugees and displaced persons.

And it is necessary because, at this very moment, the international community is struggling both to come to terms with the challenges and opportunities posed by rapid rates of urbanization and to respond humanely and adequately to an incredible global humanitarian and refugee crisis.

The relationship between these two challenges is becoming increasingly clear.

Many of the world’s 60million displaced persons and the estimated 244 million international migrants and refugees live in urban areas.

Displaced people in particular generally live in substandard housing and in informal settlements and do not receive the assistance required to support immediate needs and find longer-term solutions for their plight.

This is occurring at a time when the proportion of the world’s population living in urban areas is rapidly increasing and expected to add some 2.5 billion people to the urban population by 2050.

How we respond to these trends will, in some respects, go a long way to determining whether we live up to the ambition of the SDGs, the Addis Agenda and the Paris Agreement or not.

Both migration and urbanization have the potential to usher in a new era of well-being, transformation, resource efficiency and economic growth.

Throughout history, civilizations have consistently relied on migration to drive economic development and in recent times, we have seen many developing countries, particularly in the Asia Pacific and African regions, benefit greatly from urbanization.

Of course, large scale movements of refugees and migrants together with rapid urbanization will also pose challenges.

Poverty, for example, is often heavily concentrated in urban areas.

Nearly one billion city dwellers still live in slums.

Inequalities are more profound in urban areas and ethnic.

And hosting communities face enormous pressures on, and competition for, scarce social services, accommodation and jobs, often resulting in dangerous social tensions.

As we look towards the World Humanitarian Summit, the High Level Meeting on Migrants and Refugees and Habitat III, therefore, we have to realize that business as usual approach will simply not do.

We must be mindful of the big picture – of today’s population dynamics and the benefits of migration.

We must work towards more strategic and long-term solutions including through more predictable financing and more equitable burden sharing.

And we must do all we can to live up to our shared commitment to leave no-one behind by advancing international solidarity and protecting the rights of the most vulnerable.

Thank you.