

16 September 2016

**71<sup>st</sup> Session of the General Assembly**

**Remarks by H.E. Peter Thomson  
UNHCR #WithRefugees Petition Handover ahead of  
the UN Summit for Refugees and Migrants**

Secretary-General, High Commissioner, Distinguished guests, Friends — Welcome to the General Assembly Hall.

On behalf of my predecessor His Excellency Mogens Lykketoft, President of the 70th session of the General Assembly, and I, let me say thank you.

We are the co-chairs of Monday's UN Summit for Refugees and Migrants.

Thank you for bringing this important petition to our attention as we prepare to welcome Heads of State, Ministers and leaders from United Nations, the private sector and civil society to the United Nations for the High-Level week.

My priority this year as President of the 71 session of the General Assembly is to make a universal push to transform our world through the implementation of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

In agreeing to those goals embodied in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the international community pledged that “no one will be left behind”. The principle of leaving no-one behind is that we cannot ignore our most vulnerable, in fact we must prioritize them.

We hope that 2016 will be a transformative year for refugees and migrants in redefining and focusing international cooperation on one of the most critical challenges of our generation.

This petition — safely delivered here today — represents the voices of more than a million people who have publicly declared their stand “WITH refugees”. People — no different than us apart from the circumstances in which they find themselves — forced to flee their homes, often leaving everything behind.

This petition does indeed send a clear message to governments that they must act with solidarity and shared responsibility.

The New York Declaration which is set to be adopted by all 193 Member States at the Summit on Monday — here in the General Assembly — reflects the collective commitment of the international community to protect the rights of refugees and migrants, enhance humanitarian assistance and strengthen international cooperation on migration.

Thank you coming and thank you for your commitment to protect the rights of refugees and migrants.