



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

6 November 2015

Excellency,

I refer to my letter dated 22 October 2015, through which I informed you of the formal meeting of the General Assembly on 20 November to consider agenda item 130 “Global awareness of the tragedies of irregular migrants in the Mediterranean basin with specific emphasis on Syrian asylum seekers”. The plenary meeting of the General Assembly will start at 11.00 am.

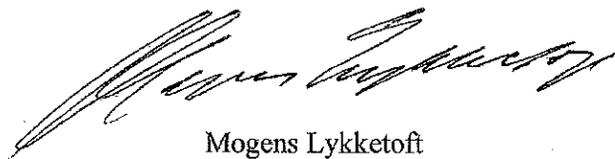
This meeting will be preceded by an informal meeting of the General Assembly on 19 November from 3-6pm in the Trusteeship Council to consider ways to advance a comprehensive response to the global humanitarian and refugee crisis. It will contribute to and complement the plenary meeting and will consist of interventions from a number of panelists, followed by an interactive discussion between Member States, Observers, UN agencies and civil society. The concept note and draft programme of this informal meeting is attached.

Please note that there will be no list of speakers for the informal meeting and Member States are encouraged to engage in an interactive discussion with the panelists and to make formal statements at the plenary meeting the following day.

To All Permanent Representatives and
Permanent Observers to the United Nations
New York

This crisis demands greater leadership and immediate action from the international community. I therefore encourage high level participation from Member States at these informal and plenary meetings of the General Assembly.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.



Mogens Lykketoft

Encl: 5 pages

Concept Note

Informal Meeting of the General Assembly to Consider Ways to Advance a Comprehensive Response to the Global Humanitarian and Refugee Crisis

19 November 2015, 3-6 pm, Trusteeship Council

Background

According to UNHCR,¹ 60 million people are forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of war and persecution. This includes 19,5 million refugees, 38,2 million internally displaced persons and 1,8 million asylum seekers.

A global humanitarian and refugee crisis of this magnitude has not been seen since the Second World War and overall, the number of people in need of protection and humanitarian assistance has nearly doubled in the past decade. Despite a significant increase in humanitarian assistance and the tireless efforts of humanitarian actors, the global humanitarian system simply cannot keep pace with growing needs. Traditional forms of durable solutions such as third-country resettlement are proving inadequate, the infrastructure of receiving countries is under great stress, and there have been reports of intolerance towards refugees and asylum seekers in many countries. The impact of this crisis is immense and appears to be only likely to increase.

For this reason, the President of the General Assembly decided to convene an informal meeting of the General Assembly to consider ways to advance a Comprehensive Response to the Global Humanitarian and Refugee Crisis.

Objectives

This crisis calls for an urgent and comprehensive response from the international community based on respect for international refugee and human rights law, and on principles of solidarity and responsibility sharing.

¹ Statement by Antonio Guterres, UNHCR, to the third Committee of the UN General Assembly, 3 November 2015

The informal meeting will therefore serve to identify specific actions and elements of that response. It will build on the High Level Event on migration and refugee movements organized by the UN Secretary General on 30 September 2015, and help member states prepare for the plenary meeting of the UN General Assembly on November 20th to consider item 130 'Global awareness of the tragedies of irregular migrants in the Mediterranean basin with specific emphasis on Syrian asylum seekers'.

A comprehensive response requires action across a number of areas including:

- Intensifying efforts to find political solutions to conflicts and violence and addressing other root causes of forced displacement;
- Providing protection for refugees and asylum-seekers including through third-country resettlement and other legal avenues;
- Ensuring protection and durable solutions for internally displaced persons;
- Ensuring predictable and adequate financing for humanitarian action;
- Supporting receiving countries that are bearing the greatest burden;
- Increasing the impact and effectiveness of humanitarian response;
- Enhancing coordination between humanitarian and development communities, particularly in the context of the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

Given the short time available and bearing in mind processes underway in other forum, the informal meeting will focus on three of these issues

1. Providing protection including through third-country resettlement and other legal avenues

UNHCR² points out that an estimated 350,000 refugees and migrants were reported to have taken to the sea in 2014, with 4300 people tragically losing their lives. Since January this year, 762,000 people have arrived in Europe alone and more than 3400 have drowned.

Saving lives, providing protection and upholding human dignity must be the number one priority. States must comply with their obligations under international humanitarian, refugee and human rights law and respect, protect and fulfil the rights of refugees and asylum seekers.

² A/70/12, Report of UNHCR on questions relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and humanitarian questions

In addition, although 100,000 people were resettled in 2014, this only amounts to 15% of the global resettlement needs for last year. Given the scale of the crisis, it is clear that current levels of third-country resettlement need to be reviewed. The fundamental principle of international cooperation to share burdens and responsibilities must inform the global response.

The international community must also improve access to other legal avenues of protection for asylum-seekers, refugees and other persons who are forced to flee.

2. Ensuring predictable and adequate financing for humanitarian action

According to the Synthesis Report of the Consultation Process for the World Humanitarian Summit,³ the size of UN-led appeals increased from 3,4 billion USD in 2003 to 18,7 billion USD in 2015. The UN-led appeal for 2015 may reach a record 20 billion USD, but remains only 42 percent funded.

Provision of timely, flexible, adequate and predictable resources is essential for humanitarian action. The financing pool for humanitarian assistance, however, needs to be enlarged with innovative funding mechanisms embracing a wider group of state and other actors. In this regard, the findings and recommendations of the High Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing will be timely.

The short term nature of humanitarian financing is another major barrier for undertaking effective multi-year humanitarian planning.⁴ In view of the increasingly protracted nature of humanitarian crisis, there is a pressing need for multi-year planning and enhanced coordination among humanitarian and development communities.

Furthermore while ensuring adequate and predictable funding for humanitarian action, adequate focus also needs to be placed on the effective use of resources and possible ways to increase the impact of humanitarian response.

3. Supporting receiving countries that are bearing the greatest burden

According to UNHCR,⁵ almost nine out of every 10 refugees (86 per cent) are in regions and countries considered economically less developed. Many of these States are crucial pillars of peace and stability in their regions.

³ Synthesis Report of the Consultation Process for the World Humanitarian Summit

⁴ A/70/77-E/2015/64

⁵ UNHCR, Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2014

The social infrastructure, including the health and education systems, of many of these countries is under immense strain as countries struggle to meet the basic needs of both refugees and their own populations. A significant number of these countries are middle income countries and may have less access to bilateral and multilateral development cooperation mechanisms. In this context, the international community, including multilateral development banks, must consider how best to increase financial support to these countries.

Questions for consideration on these three topics:

- How can the international community better ensure the protection of refugees and asylum seekers, advance more effective third-country resettlement and enhance access to other legal avenues of protection?
- What steps can be taken to ensure predictable and adequate financing for humanitarian action and to increase the impact of humanitarian response?
- What measures can be taken to support those countries hosting large numbers of refugees?

Format

In addition to remarks from the President of the UN General Assembly and the UN Deputy Secretary-General, a number of panellists will be invited to share their views on these three major issues. Member States, the UN system, other stakeholders and civil society will engage in an interactive discussion on these issues. Formal statements are discouraged as these can be delivered at the plenary meeting of the General Assembly on Item 130, the following day.

Outcome

The President of the General Assembly will highlight aspects of the discussion when addressing the plenary meeting of the General Assembly on 20 November 2015. A short summary of proceedings shall also be prepared.

**Informal Meeting of the General Assembly to Consider Ways to Advance a
Comprehensive Response to the Global Humanitarian and Refugee Crisis
19 November 2015, Trusteeship Council, 3-6 pm**

DRAFT PROGRAMME

15.00-15.15 Opening Remarks:

- H.E. Mogens Lykketoft, President of the UN General Assembly
- H.E. Jan Eliasson, UN Deputy Secretary-General

15.15-16.45 Interactive High Level Panel:

Moderator and Panellists

- Providing protection including through third country resettlement and other legal avenues

Discussion

- Ensuring predictable and adequate financing for humanitarian action and increasing the impact of humanitarian response

Discussion

- Increasing support to receiving countries that are bearing the greatest burden

Discussion

An interactive discussion with Member States, Observers, UN agencies and civil society will follow presentations from two panellists on each theme.

17.50-18.00 Closing Remarks