

Press briefing by the President of the General Assembly, H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, and the Special Adviser on Addressing Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants, Karen AbuZayd. UNHQ, 9 August 2016

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Opening statement by President of the General Assembly, H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft

Thank you for coming and also to those of you watching via video link.

Let me start by saying I very much welcome last week's agreement by Member States on the text for the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants to be adopted at the UN Summit for Refugees and Migrants on 19 September.

This text provides a very solid basis to change the paradigm on how Member States deal with the pressing issue of large movements of refugees and migrants.

It is strongly rooted in our universal principles on human rights, our commitment to sustainable development for all and the strength of our diversity. It stresses the need to work better together as an international community to deal with this very pressing issue confronting our shared humanity.

It is also very good to have agreement on the text so far in advance of the high level meeting in September. This is further evidence of the health and productivity of multilateralism to encourage solutions, especially to complex and cross-boundary issues.

Ambassador Kavar of Jordan and Ambassador Donoghue of Ireland and their teams deserve our highest praise and gratitude for their outstanding work in bringing 193 member states together for the first time to agree on commitments for both refugees and migrants.

Special Advisor Karen AbuZayd will say more about the declaration itself in a minute.

As for the Summit on 19 September, subscription opened this week for Member States. We anticipate significant participation in the one day meeting from Heads of State and Government, as well as from across other sectors such as from civil society and the private sector. This is an issue that all world leaders are very engaged in.

This is the first time in the history of the United Nations that the General Assembly has called for an international meeting at the Heads of State and Government level to address large movements of refugees and migrants.

This Summit will kick start the High-Level General Assembly week, falling the day before the General Assembly debate officially begins, and it will be co-chaired both by me and my successor, President-Elect Ambassador Peter Thomson of Fiji, the incoming President of the General Assembly for the 71st session.

The timing of the Summit is critical. More refugees and migrants are leaving their homes, travelling along dangerous routes and often failing to find long-term solutions. Their numbers have grown, but are manageable if we approach international cooperation in a spirit of shared responsibility.

It is also critical to recall that this issue, and addressing it, advances a larger global agenda that the international community has also committed to – the Sustainable Development Agenda.

Now over to Special Advisor Karen AbuZayd.