

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

As Delivered

Opening statement by Special Adviser on Addressing Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants, Karen AbuZayd

Welcome the outcome and support its achievements

I last spoke to you in May when we presented the Secretary-General's report: 'In Safety and Dignity: Addressing Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants.' I am pleased to be back to talk to you about the Outcome Document, based on the report, and was negotiated and agreed by all Member States.

I would first note that this is the first time Member States have come together to address the burning issues of refugees and migrants in a comprehensive way.

The outcome document addresses both the issues we face now and prepares us for challenges of the future. Refugees, migrants, those who assist them and their host countries and communities will all benefit if the stated commitments are met.

- For refugees the proposed 'Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework' demands that every large new outflow will receive immediate and specific attention, led by UNHCR with multiple partners, including the host state. It will be funded adequately. A review of implementation and possible revisions will be carried out and reported on by the High Commissioner for Refugees in his Annual Report to the General Assembly in 2018.
- The Framework will also address protracted refugee situations - those neglected tens of thousands of refugees, in mostly developing countries, who have been languishing in camps for decades; refugees and migrants will meet better reception at borders and better conditions once inside countries; their hosts and civil society and the UN will receive adequate funding to assist and protect them.
- For migrants, at an intergovernmental conference in 2018, a Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration will be adopted. The President of the General Assembly will begin in September to set up the processes to feed into this conference. Two countries have offered to host preparatory conferences, and the Global Forum for Migration and Development will hold a Conference in December this year in Dacca, which will help spur further action.
- For both groups, Member States have undertaken to protect the human rights of ALL refugees and migrants, ***regardless of status.***
- Attention to root causes and 'drivers' of refugee and migrant movements. These will become a priority, with the aim of improving conditions in countries of origin, so people are not forced to flee or to migrate.
- Refugees and migrants will find 'inclusion' programs on arrival in a new country-- language training, schools (all children to be enrolled within a months of arrival), scholarships and jobs.

- Refugee camps will become an exception—temporary, only in emergencies.
- The UN will lead a campaign against xenophobia-- promoting diversity and working with others to improve the narrative about refugees and migrants -- showcasing their important contributions to societies wherever they are.
- States will lead a process to develop principles and guidelines for migrants in vulnerable situations. Particular attention will be paid to women and girls in such situations.
- The private sector and international and regional financial institutions will be brought into the response plans early in each refugee outflow.
- Elements of the Grand Bargain will be employed--multi-year funding, diminished earmarking, expanded use of cash assistance, increased reliance on national responders.

Putting concerns into context

- I have mentioned some of the many positives. These are only commitments, I know, but the language in the document is strong — ‘determined’, ‘will’, ‘strongly endorse’, ‘condemn’, ‘emphasize’ for example — a result of long discussions, but finally agreed, with approval from country capitals. Some of these things may be achieved quickly, others will require time, hard work and patience. I am also aware of concerns around some of the proposals. Let me address two of these.
- The absence of a 10% resettlement quota (mentioned by UNHCR) is one. To put this in context, in 2015 UNHCR submitted 134,000 refugees for resettlement. 10% of the number of refugees in any one year would be just over 2 million to be resettled — somewhat overwhelming, even in terms of logistics (and the lengthy procedures of some countries). The document asserts that resettlement places will be made available ‘to meet the needs identified by UNHCR’, at this time set at just over 1,000,000 for 2017 — that is 5%. And we hope progress toward this goal will be visible at the 20 September Leader’s Summit, when detailed targets for resettlement, jobs, scholarships and other benefits have been set for each country participating.
- The text also changed a reference from the report regarding children--‘never’ to be detained (Convention on Rights of the Child). This was highly contentious for some states because of their national legislation related to age and from others who felt detention was sometimes necessary to protect children. The commitment then became for children ‘seldom, if ever’ to be detained. The expectation is that we will see a significant drop in the number of children in detention.

Work together and seize this historic opportunity

- As we have noted repeatedly, the Summit is an historic opportunity. Among UN departments and agencies, Member States, civil society, international financial institutions, the private sector and other partners there is a genuine, I would say even passionate, determination to act on the promises that have been made.
- We are unlikely to have this chance to act together on these issues again soon. The outcome document represents progress, achieved as a result of multiple exchanges and long discussion. My plea is to everyone, to governments and to all our partners including the media, to embrace this consensus document and to undertake to begin to implement its commitments seriously and immediately—to ensure that ‘no refugee, no migrant is left behind’.