

**STATEMENT  
FOR  
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SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL  
FOR INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION  
INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION  
“RACIAL PROFILING AND INCITEMENT TO HATRED, INCLUDING IN THE  
CONTEXT OF MIGRATION”  
New York • 21 March 2017**

President of the 71<sup>st</sup> session of the General Assembly,  
Mr. Secretary-General,  
Esteemed Panelists,  
Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my honour to be with you today, as I begin my tenure as UN Special Representative of the Secretary General for International Migration, to participate in this commemorative plenary meeting of the General Assembly to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, and to address the theme of “Racial profiling and incitement to hatred, including in the context of migration”.

In fact, the theme of this commemorative event could not be more timely, as you, the General Assembly, recently adopted the New York Declaration by consensus last September, and have embarked on developing a Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, that will, among other issues look at “Combating racism, xenophobia, discrimination and intolerance towards all migrants”. With an estimated 244 million international migrants today, up from 175 million in 2000 and expected to only increase, the Global Compact can be a significant advancement in not only how we perceive and treat migrants, but also how societies can embrace diversity.

But while the international community took this historic step at last September's Summit, we are at the same time witnessing significant, widespread hostility towards migrants in many countries. Manifestations of racial discrimination and xenophobia towards migrants have unfortunately kept pace with increased human mobility. Even in countries that have in the past taken pride in welcoming migrants, we hear strident voices of apprehension towards migrants arriving at their borders today. The reality is that no country can claim to be free from racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia or intolerance.

When the discourse on migration policy reverts to feverish debates which demonize migrants as burdens to society or perpetuate inaccuracies, the factual and overwhelmingly positive contributions migrants make to our societies and economies are overshadowed, and risk being forgotten altogether. Often, these politically charged debates are accompanied by political calls to restrict or halt migration altogether, as well as heightened negativity in the media. Sometimes, they can spill over into acts of violence or intimidation against minority groups.

Migration debates in many parts of the world have created a climate in which it is all too easy to see migrants as being responsible – directly or indirectly – for unemployment, security issues or a lack of social cohesion, amongst other issues. But we know that these types of issues are rooted in much more complex processes of change. Migrants simply become the scapegoats for the varied effects of these processes.

In order to address misperceptions of migration and the discriminatory, xenophobic and intolerant views those misperceptions foster, we need to

create a more open, balanced and comprehensive discourse about migration, one that moves away from migrants being seen as a burden or a threat towards one that recognizes and embraces human mobility and diversity as a contribution to vibrant societies and strong economies. We must work towards social inclusion, to foster a two-way exchange that allows both migrants and host communities to thrive and transform collectively.

Migrants are the bridges between countries of origin, transit and destination. They are the spark that ignites new ideas and new thinking, fosters innovation, and propels our societies forward rather than backward. They bring with them their entrepreneurial skills to contribute to their new countries, while also contributing to their countries of origin through their remittances, which in 2015 alone exceeded \$601 billion<sup>1</sup>. As more and more people are on the move, more cultures become intertwined and societies become more diverse.

As pluralist societies are more likely to be the norm now rather than the exception, one of our most important challenges is to help appreciate and manage this growing social, cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity. In this regard, I am especially proud to work closely with the Secretary-General to support the TOGETHER Campaign, which Member States committed to support in the New York Declaration. TOGETHER starts a new dialogue about refugees and migrants; one that highlights the economic, cultural and social contributions of migrants to foster social cohesion, while countering the negative stereotyping and falsehoods about migrants. I believe that one of the most important elements of the TOGETHER campaign is that it puts the responsibility on each of us – the UN, governments, the private sector,

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<sup>1</sup> Migration and Remittances Factbook 2016; Third Edition, World Bank: <https://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPROSPECTS/Resources/334934-1199807908806/4549025-1450455807487/Factbookpart1.pdf>, page V.

media, academia, civil society and migrants themselves – to play a role to encourage a discourse based on facts and a dialogue that embraces diversity. It builds from the local level up, through the engagement of individuals, communities, cities and countries seeking to change the discourse and promote our common values of tolerance and respect for human dignity.

In conclusion, while we collectively work towards the development of the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, let us ensure that it focuses on ways in which we can all work together to eliminate racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance towards migrants. To do so, it is essential that we improve the public perception of migrants based on factual information about the positive contributions of migrants.

As I embark on my new role, I wholeheartedly embrace and pledge to advance our collective effort to shift the narrative and to promote a global community where migrants and all peoples are free from discrimination.

Thank you.