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**Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for
International Migration**

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Statement – Global Mayors Summit

New York, 18 September 2017

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to be here with you today, at the Global Mayors Summit on Migration and Refugee Policy and Practice organized by the City of New York, with the Open Society Foundations, Columbia University's Global Policy Initiative, and Concordia. I also wish to thank the International Peace Institute for hosting this event.

I am delighted to see some 50 Mayors and other city leaders gathered here at the time of the opening of the United Nations General Assembly.

As you know, this time last year, the UN General Assembly convened a High-Level Summit on Addressing Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants. The Summit culminated with global leaders endorsing, by consensus, a historic document entitled the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, in which States committed to develop two "compacts", one for migrants and another for refugees, by September 2018.

If successful, these compacts will constitute a global framework on the rules of engagement and the political commitments required by States to enable life-saving international cooperation; to ensure that all migration is safe, orderly and regular; and to achieve more effective refugee protection.

While my mandate focuses on the migration compact, I never forget the complementarity – and considerable confluence of interests – raised by issues concerning both refugees and migrants.

Since I began my mandate as UN Special Representative for International Migration last March, I have been a strong proponent of the need to engage with local leaders as we seek to understand the implications of a more mobile world, and work to better address the resulting challenges and opportunities.

As in other areas of international policy-making, cities are increasingly active in the realm of migration policy and practice. You are more and more collaborating across national borders to share ideas, form coalitions, and at times challenge national governments to adopt policies that will be truly effective at the local level.

Cities are uniquely positioned to harvest the benefit of well-managed migration policies. Conversely, they are also at the frontlines in addressing migration challenges as and when they occur. You play the leading role both in receiving migrants, providing immediate services and in guiding longer-term efforts at social and economic integration. There is a symbiotic relationship between the policies cities adopt (or don't adopt) and the success of our efforts in shaping national and international policies and processes relating to migrants.

Fifty-five percent of the world's population resides in cities; a figure that is only expected to grow. The leadership of mayors and cities in fostering and steering expanding and diverse societies will become all the more important in the decades to come.

Diversity in and of itself does not equate to social and economic integration; meaningful policies must be put in place that apply to the population as a whole, including host communities which in many cases face similar marginalization and exclusion challenges to those of migrants.

In a time when there is as much hope as there is concern and fear about migration, city leadership has shown by example the possibilities of constructively meeting the needs of its residents – natives and migrants – with an open and welcoming attitude. From access to municipal identification cards, to city-wide billboard campaigns fostering the importance of respect, safety and dignity for all – the key principles of the United Nations’s Together campaign – cities play a key role in shaping public attitudes around migration and in how their immigrant communities engage in municipal life.

As national governments grapple with issues related to irregular entry of migrants, local officials are more likely to interact with established irregular migrants, many of whom work in the informal economy in conditions of vulnerability and precariousness. Putting in place "firewalls" between immigration enforcement and public services is increasingly seen as an effective way of facilitating access to justice, housing, health care, education, social protection and social and labour services for migrants.

On these, as on many other issues, cooperation at all levels is essential to managing migration in a way that is people-centered and forward-looking. City administrations will need support from each other, from national and regional governments, from the international community and from all actors in society who are engaging in this realm, including NGOs, businesses and private citizens. Such support is vital for all cities but more pronounced in resource-poor cities and urban settings.

It is for this reason – in understanding the different capacities and resources of cities around the world - that I will also invite States and other donors to support dedicated programmes that help developing cities build their capacities in this area and engage more directly with other cities to overcome challenges and to more regularly exchange their experiences and good practices.

In closing, I wish to reiterate my appreciation for your presence here at the United Nations, and my appreciation to the City of New York as a partner of this Global Mayors Summit. I look forward to hearing from you on how we, collectively, may join efforts as we develop the two global compacts through a variety of initiatives to be discussed in the coming days. The outcome of your discussions will constitute an invaluable official input into the process and I am confident that the United Nations will glean from your experiences insights that will guide our work.

Thank you very much.