



PORTUGAL

Address by His Excellency

the President of the Portuguese Republic

to the High Level Meeting

on Large Movements

of Refugees and Migrants

New York, 19 September 2016

The President of the General Assembly,

Mr Secretary-General,

Madam Special Advisor,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Mr President,

The management of large migratory flows is one of the main challenges that we, the United Nations convened here, must face up to. It is urgent that we bring people back to the core of our decisions without leaving anyone behind, as we promised in this very Assembly a year ago to the day.

But how do we turn rhetoric into the practice of dignity? By formulating concrete, realistic and feasible responses. Founded on bold cooperation between countries of origin, transit and destination, and on a concerted action between States, international organisations and civil society, while fully respecting human rights.

Above all, it is **fundamental to integrate migration, humanitarian aid and development policies.**

Besides the most immediate hosting issue, the effective integration of those we receive and, most importantly, the factors that drive a human being to leave his or her country and take extreme risks, with the loss of life in many cases, in search of a job and a decent existence, are matters of concern to us.

To begin with the root causes, the cooperation between nations and civil societies needs to be much more effective in stimulating investment, vocational training and job creation in less developed countries. Portugal has focused on this preventive action.

With regard to integration, and bearing in mind the Strategic Plan for Migration adopted in 2015, Portugal promotes access to education to the children of all immigrants, and ensures access to the National Health System to all residents, whether or not they have a regular status.

It also provides for enhanced protection of undocumented children and the children of irregular migrants. Their details are confidential and may not be shared with immigration authorities. This practice prevents situations in which children do not attend school or receive proper healthcare for fear of their status being exposed.

Furthermore, Portugal has actively contributed to the management of the current refugee crisis.

We undertook to host all the refugees who were allocated to us, under the relocation and resettlement schemes adopted in 2015 within the European Union. However, bearing in mind the scale of this tragedy and in a joint effort with the most affected European partners, we volunteered to welcome more than double the people allocated to our country. We have already relocated and resettled refugees from Turkey, Greece, Italy and Egypt, the latter in cooperation with ACNUR.

We have also increased our financial contributions to different humanitarian organisations and agencies working on the ground.

Within this effort which brought together the public and private sectors and many volunteers under a refugee support platform,

Portugal does not detain asylum seekers as they enter the country, and our refugee hosting model does not use detention facilities, rather favouring their full integration into society.

Such integration, however, implies freedom of choice and the right to education for young people. The continuation of their educational pathway, including tertiary studies, is a necessary condition for these youngsters to be able to rebuild, pacify and develop their countries of origin in the near future.

Facilitating access to higher education in emergency situations proves to be instrumental in fulfilling this goal, and constitutes a key component of humanitarian aid. Portugal therefore supports the Global Platform for Syrian Students, a programme of emergency scholarships which has already ensured the admission

of dozens of Syrian students into universities in 10 countries. Portugal goes so far as to support the establishment of a Rapid Response Mechanism for Higher Education in Emergencies.

In short, Mr. President, in the matter of migration and in all other matters, you can rely on Portugal's full commitment to this foremost seat of multilateralism which legitimises international collective action. My country's commitment to the United Nations, the Charter and its guiding principles and values is unyielding and will always be wholehearted and enduring.

Thank you very much.