

20 September 2016

71st Session of the General Assembly

**Remarks by H.E. Peter Thomson
Leaders' Summit on Refugees**

Distinguished Heads of State and Government,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The deadly attacks on a UN aid convey in Syria overnight, are a horrifying reminder of the day-to-day terror of life in a warzone, and of the life-or-death predicaments that compel so many to take perilous journeys in the hope of finding refuge and safety.

It is virtually impossible for any of us to know what we would do in the face of such tragic circumstances.

But what we are able to do, is to decide how we chose to respond to the desperate plight of others.

The refugee and humanitarian crisis facing our world is of a scale that has not been seen since World War II, with more than 65 million vulnerable people having been forcibly displaced.

Their plight is humanity's shared responsibility.

These people are in desperate need of compassion and understanding. They also need practical help – services, opportunity, and the chance to build a new life.

A global response is required.

Yesterday, the UN General Assembly took an important step, when leaders adopted the New York Declaration – the first UN agreement dedicated to addressing both refugees and migrants.

The Declaration reflected a collective commitment to do more to address the crisis, including supporting the countries most affected, and increasing humanitarian assistance.

But these commitments now need to translate into concrete actions – increased resettlements, real policy changes, and additional financial support.

That is why today's Summit is so important.

I thank the co-hosts for their leadership in galvanizing the political momentum that began with yesterday's adoption of the New York Declaration, and I commend the countries that have today made pledges. These commitments begin the process of implementing the New York Declaration, and will bring much needed relief to desperate people.

I call on other States to consider what more they can do.

Excellencies,

Implemented effectively, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will help to promote peaceful and inclusive societies, sustain peace, and alleviate many of the causes driving refugees from their homes.

It is imperative therefore that we step up our efforts to implement the SDGs.

This is why I have made the principle objective of my Presidency of the 71st Session of the General Assembly, overseeing a universal push towards implementation of all 17 of the SDGs.

There can, after all, be no sustainable development without sustainable peace.

In line with the New York Declaration, during the 71st Session I will also take forward the commitment of the UN membership to begin a process leading to a Global Compact on Migration, beginning with the imminent appointment of co-facilitators, as well as a comprehensive refugee response framework that will complement the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.

The political will, and willingness to contribute, demonstrated at today's Summit will help to create a conducive environment to move these processes forward.

Excellencies,

Having borne witness to so much displacement and suffering over recent months, it is encouraging to see the international community come together to take its first steps towards building a global response that will save lives, protect rights, and share the responsibility of the refugee crisis amongst us all.

We must now build on this with ambition and humanity.

I thank you.