

Keynote Speech
By
Un Deputy Secretary General Jan Eliasson

8th Global Forum on Migration and Development in Istanbul, 14/10/2015

Prime Minister Davutoglu, Mr. Chair, Foreign Minister Sinirlio, Ministers, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Distinguished Delegates,

Let me first, on behalf of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, express the heartfelt condolences of the United Nations to our Turkish friends and colleagues for the loss of life and for the horrific human toll caused by the cowardly terrorist attack in Ankara last Saturday. This inhuman act has to be met with courage, resilience and cool determination never to be intimidated or provoked by those who want to spread fear in our societies.

Mr. Chair, the Turkish stewardship of the Global Forum has coincided with an era of unique opportunities but also unprecedented challenges and problems.

Our ability to respond to migration and refugee movements is being tested as never before.

More people have been uprooted from their homes than at any time since World War II. People are fleeing war, persecution, abuse and despair.

The images of suffering haunt our conscience and defy our values. Tales of heroism have stirred our souls.

We are all familiar with the scale of our challenge – around 240 million international migrants and more than 60 million refugees and forcibly displaced persons.

This is a global phenomenon, a global challenge. We have recently witnessed great numbers of people crossing international borders in South-East Asia, the Middle East, North and sub-Saharan Africa, Central America and Europe.

This challenge is not only a crisis of numbers. It is a crisis of solidarity. It is a crisis that requires mobilisation of political will but also viable and forward-looking solutions.

It is fitting that we meet in Istanbul today to address this challenge. Turkey has been at the heart of the refugee crisis in this region, as have Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and Iraq, paying a high price for the horrific war in Syria which must come to an end.

I want to express my deep appreciation to the Government and people of Turkey for receiving more than two million Syrian refugees, working so well together with our UN agencies and the NGO community.

You have also played a central role in doing the important and innovative groundwork for this Forum. Turkey has organized meetings on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, on partnerships to promote and protect the rights of migrants, on the role of the private sector, and on refugees and forced migration.

Turkey initiated the first ever G20 event on migration, development and decent work. It showcased the contributions of migrants to countries of destination. And it highlighted ways to counter stereotypes in today's often divisive public debate.

And your focus on the role of women, not as powerless victims, but as true agents of change, is a great message to the world.

Distinguished Delegates,

For many years, we have heard calls for greater efforts to prevent and resolve conflicts, to grant protection to those fleeing and to find durable solutions for refugees.

Now, more than ever, we must translate these calls into action.

Tackling the root causes of forced or involuntary migration is a key element of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – goal number 10.

By improving conditions for a life of dignity, by reducing inequalities, and by promoting peaceful societies, we can make crossing international borders a matter of informed choice, not desperate necessity.

Cross-border movements should be managed in a proactive, transparent and predictable way. If not, we will continue to only react to crises in a belated, piecemeal and ad hoc fashion.

On the margins of the General Assembly in New York two weeks ago, the Secretary-General convened a High-level meeting on migration and refugee movements. At the meeting, he spelled out some key principles to guide our actions.

Saving lives must be our first priority. Despite additional search and rescue efforts, we continue to witness people in great numbers dying while seeking to cross borders.

Second, we must focus on protection. Refugees have the right to seek asylum. But let us remember that people are often not just fleeing conflict and persecution. They are escaping abject poverty, poor governance and lack of opportunities. Given these mixed

flows, states must strengthen mechanisms to identify persons in need of international protection and, at the same time, ensure respect for human rights of all. Recent crises have highlighted a critical gap in such mechanisms and situations.

Third, non-discrimination. Migrants and refugees must be treated with respect and dignity. I call on leaders to counter xenophobia, discrimination and violence against those seeking protection. A positive narrative on migrants and refugees is urgently needed to meet such threats.

Fourth, preparedness. We must build up reception centres and well-functioning asylum systems.

Fifth, sharing of responsibility must underpin our reactions to refugee or migrant crises. I appeal to all countries to show generosity in their response. We must not be selective with respect to a person's religion, educational background or origin.

We should open our eyes to the vital contributions of refugees and migrants, rather than seeing these men, women and children as a burden. They fill labour market gaps, create business and businesses, and add to the national and local tax base. They contribute to economic growth in countries of destination as well as in home countries, not least through financial remittances.

Sixth, international cooperation. We need better collaboration between countries of origin, transit and destination. Each has their special challenges. We must work together to address them as an integrated whole. And we must focus on the root causes, in particular ending the conflict in Syria.

Seventh, managed migration. We must create safe and legal channels for refugees and labour migration at all skills levels. Mobility is at the very core of globalization. Only when we acknowledge this can we build systems of governance for migration fit for the 21st century.

Eighth, we must anticipate future challenges. This includes the plight of those escaping areas ravaged by climate change – a new serious danger in the global landscape.

By transparent rules for the entry and stay of migrant workers, refugees and their families, we provide a viable alternative to irregular migration, so often controlled by ruthless smugglers and traffickers. By this, we can also build trust among our citizens. Governments, not criminal networks, must be in charge of migration policies and practices.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

Now – where do we go from here?

First, the Global Forum has successfully built networks and cooperation among the key actors. It is now time for the Forum to promote action. The Forum and its Member States can now take action to facilitate mobility, reduce migration costs and ensure fair access to benefits.

Second, after the adoption of the 2030 Development Agenda, we should integrate rights-based migration into our national policies and programmes. Our UN country teams are prepared to work with the Forum's national focal points to achieve this.

Third, the follow-up of the 2030 Agenda requires a comprehensive approach. All actors need to be involved. How can we, for instance, ensure that the work of the Forum is reflected in the thematic reviews of the ECOSOC High-level Political Forum which will take place in New York? I trust that tomorrow's roundtable will provide concrete recommendations.

Fourth, the Global Forum should work closely with the UN System, in particular the Global Migration Group (GMG). The GMG can help integrate migration into national development plans. It can also provide technical assistance to develop migration-related indicators.

Fifth, since most migration occurs between neighbouring countries, the Forum should work closely with regional organizations, in the spirit of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter.

Sixth, and finally, it is time to mobilise the political will and the necessary resources to build a better global system for the governance of international migration. Here, the Global Forum has a key role to play. The Secretary-General, through his Special Representative on International Migration, Peter Sutherland, is committed to support you. UNHCR, under the leadership of Antonio Guterres, and other UN entities are actors in this regard. Let me also underline how much the UN appreciates the valuable work of IOM led by William Swing. I also want to pay tribute to the indispensable work of civil societies and NGOs.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

In closing, I want to thank you for coming together to address some of the key policy issues of the 21st century:

- to seize the opportunities of migration, while addressing its challenges and problems;
- to facilitate labour mobility, while protecting the rights of migrants and refugees; and
- to ensure that migration is an option, not a necessity.

For many years, governments have worked to establish clear rules for cross-border trade, finance and services. Yet, the cross-border movement of human beings remains insufficiently regulated and managed.

By working together in a cooperative, innovative and constructive way, we can leave behind us the many tragedies we see unfold around the world. By this we can help build a life of opportunity and dignity for all.

I thank you for your attention and wish you a successful meeting.