

**Statement by the President of the 72nd Session of the UN General Assembly
GLOBAL COMPACT ON MIGRATION: OPENING OF
INTERGOVERNMENTAL NEGOTIATIONS
20 February 2018**

Excellencies, co-facilitators, distinguished delegates, dear colleagues,

I want to start, today, by thanking our two co-facilitators, Ambassadors Camacho and Lauber. There is no denying the time and effort they have put into this process. They have listened carefully throughout all of our consultations and stocktaking. Often, when you went home for the evening, their work was just beginning. But, that work now turns to you. Because, today, we start the process of negotiating a Global Compact on Migration. Although our co-facilitators and I will be here, to convene and support, everything now lies in your hands. Before we begin, I want to make three main points.

First, I want to stress that migration is a fact of life. That is the way it has always been. And that is the way it will always be. Regardless of what we think or say about migration, it is here to stay. We do not have the choice to accept, or reject migration. Because, it is here. It is happening, in every corner of the world. It is, as I said, a fact. But we do have another choice. We can resist this fact, or we can embrace it. We can put our heads in the sand. We can tell ourselves that we will deal with it tomorrow. We can defer action to another time -another generation - another crisis. Or, we can take action. We can plan ahead. We can put a system in place. And we can, at last, respond to a global phenomenon with a global solution.

My second point is that the stakes are high. We made a public promise in 2016. And people all over the world are waiting for us to fulfil it. Also, before we begin, I want to remind us that the eyes of the world are watching. And, the credibility of the United Nations is at stake. Because, this is the Organization we - ourselves - built to respond to global trends and challenges. And this is the Organization that holds the key for a better future - for everyone. Therefore, if we reach a strong agreement, we will all win. Even if we do not get exactly what we wanted. Because we will solidify the role of the United Nations in the world. And this is a role that will play out to benefit us all. So, we cannot see these negotiations as a way to strengthen our own positions. We must see them as an opportunity to strengthen our own United Nations.

The third point I want to make is one that I have made before. Many times, in fact. But it is too important not to emphasize, one more time. This process will go nowhere without flexibility and compromise. Red lines will not move us along. Repetition will not lead to progress. To give this IGN process a chance, we must be open - we must be flexible - and we must be willing to compromise. Let us look not only at what we must defend - but also what we can give up. Let us aim for proposals - not rejections. Let us listen to different positions, rather than shouting them down. And, let us have the courage to compromise.

Excellencies, dear colleagues,

You have a big task ahead. And, I won't take up any more of your time, before it begins. So, I wish you luck. And I remind you, once more, that everything now lies in your hands.

Thank you.