

**STATEMENT BY H.E. MR. MIROSLAV LAJČÁK, PRESIDENT OF THE
72ND SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY, AT CLOSING
CEREMONY OF STOCKTAKING MEETING OF THE PREPARATORY
PROCESS OF THE GLOBAL COMPACT FOR SAFE, ORDERLY AND
REGULAR MIGRATION**

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Puerto Vallarta, Mexico

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, Special Representative Arbour, esteemed co-facilitators, dear colleagues,

I am very glad to be here, in this beautiful city of Puerto Vallarta. I want to express my thanks to the Government and people of Mexico, for welcoming us all so warmly.

The New York Declaration was a major achievement. That is because we did something which had not been done before. For the first time, we committed to global cooperation on migration. And we committed to doing so under one Global Compact. However, as significant as this commitment was, it was *all* we had. We didn't know how it would all happen. We didn't know exactly when it would happen. And, we didn't know what it would entail.

Since the adoption of the Declaration in 2016, we have achieved a lot. We have set timelines. We have decided on clear modalities. Through our discussions, we have identified broad building blocks for an eventual Compact. We have begun to see results at the national and regional levels. And what's even more important, we have organised and participated in what I believe to be the most comprehensive and inclusive international discussions on migration in history.

The time here in Puerto Vallarta has been very important for the process. The collective effort of all of you here – ably led by the co-facilitators – has created a positive dynamic for the way forward. As we come to the end of these discussions, I want to do three things:

- One, reflect on the knowledge and insight we have gained.
- Two, point out to the areas of convergence that have emerged.
- And three, look to the negotiations ahead.

So, first, reflection. Simply put, we know more about international migration now than we did when we started.

A lot more. On many different fronts. *We know more about the numbers.*

Still not enough - because, we need significant improvements to data collection. However, the information we *do* have gives us a much more accurate idea of the scale, trends and demographics of international migration. For example, we know that less than 5% of the world's population is moving across borders. We know that more and more women migrate, and that the average age of an international migrant is 39. We know that more people move among countries in the Global South than to destinations in the Global North. These are not always the facts and figures represented in our newspapers or on social media. And I am glad that many of you stressed them, again, during this meeting.

Secondly, we know more about the practice

Our discussions have allowed us to identify some best practices from our national responses to international migration so far. For example:

- We heard from Thailand that it has developed a scheme to promote the health of both documented and undocumented migrants, as well as their dependents.
- Ecuador detailed its efforts to provide migrants with identity cards, ensuring their access to health and education services, as well as to justice.
- We now know that countries like Sierra Leone and South Africa support migrants to obtain passports and other identity documents, which can expedite their eventual return home.

Furthermore, we know more about the impact.

That is because this process has allowed us to gain new and diverse perspectives. Over the past months, we have heard from a wide range of actors.

- We have heard from community activists, who have mobilised against hate speech, and helped to promote integration.
- We have heard from police officers, who have been the first responders in cases of human trafficking.
- And we have heard from civil society actors, who have grappled to respond to extensive needs, with scarce resources.

I think it is safe to say that we have all gained knowledge and insight, which we may not have had when we started last year. In this way, we can now better understand what migration means for those on the frontlines. And I am confident that these perspectives will enrich both our negotiations and the Compact that will come out of them.

Excellencies,

Our learning has continued, here, in Mexico. You have come here with concrete recommendations and proposals. The ‘idea labs’, in particular, have produced important food for thought. And, now, as we come to the end of this meeting – and, indeed, the end of this part of the process – it is time to take stock of our discussions so far.

So, I want to use my second point to give you my own stocktake.

And, I want to start by being frank: there are issues we continue to disagree on. However, I have also identified strong common positions. I will highlight some of them.

The first is that is we cannot keep going as we are. Throughout all the discussions I and my team have attended, I have not heard a single voice arguing that our current response to international migration is sustainable. In fact, what I have heard instead is a resounding rejection of business as usual.

The second is that migration is a global phenomenon. Our discussions have highlighted the international nature of migration. This has led many of you to underline the need for an international response. And it has led many of you to reaffirm that the United Nations is the best – and, in fact, the only – forum in which this response can be formulated.

The third is that we need to have a credible follow-up mechanism. This is essential for implementing what we agree upon.

The next area of convergence I want to highlight is state sovereignty. Member States will determine their own migration policies. The New York Declaration reiterated this; *you* reiterated this. So, it is something we can all continue to agree upon. And, it will certainly be confirmed in the Compact.

The final area of convergence I want to mention is also the most important. And that is because it relates to people. Every single one of you, in some way, talked about people. You emphasised that all people are born with fundamental rights and dignity. It is people who will negotiate the Global Compact. It is people who will implement it. And it is people who will be affected by it.

I want to thank all of you who have contributed so far: the Member States; civil society; academia; the private sector; regional organizations; and the UN entities and agencies.

Each of you has brought *unique perspectives, ideas and experiences to the table*.

Moving, now, to my third point: I want to ask you all to look ahead.

Some tough negotiations await us in the new year. Many of, you, in this room, will be driving them. And we should not underestimate the work that remains to be done. Today I want to highlight three main elements, which I hope we will see throughout our negotiations in 2018.

First, real exchange, and real dialogue. We need to hear from all Member States - from all regions. Negotiation does not come from silent participation. It does not come from reading statements, which were prepared before all views were heard. It does not come from sticking to our individual monologues. If we want a real negotiation, we need to talk, we need to listen, and we need to engage in a real dialogue.

Second, compromise. This is a necessary element of every negotiation. We don't know what the next stage of the process has in store. What we do know for certain, however, is that compromise will be essential. Even this three-day meeting has already displayed a diversity of positions. It would not be possible to fit them all in one document. It doesn't matter how highly we value our priorities, or how right we think we are. If we want to reach an agreement, we will all have to come closer to the middle.

And, finally, the third element that will be crucial to our upcoming negotiations is a commitment to multilateralism. From time to time, we must remind ourselves of what multilateralism represents. And one of those times is today.

Multilateralism is the belief that we are stronger together than apart. It is the rejection of a system based solely on power and might. It is the willingness to invite all positions and views, despite the time and effort this demands. It is the commitment to remain engaged – even when we don't all agree. And, it is the conviction that the goals and principles outlined in the United Nations Charter are as relevant today, as they were in the aftermath of World War II.

Excellencies, dear colleagues,

Very soon, we will begin to negotiate the world's first Global Compact on Migration.

Make no mistake about it: this will be a test. It will be a test of our diplomatic and negotiating skills. It will be a test of the United Nations' capacity to respond to the most pressing global issues. And, in the words of Pope Francis, it will be a "test of our humanity".

Will our successors read about our achievements, or merely our attempts? Will our experience serve as a best practice, or as a warning? Will we go down in history as diplomats who prioritised people – or our own agenda? And, will our work be deemed to have strengthened, or undercut, the role for the United Nations in responding to the phenomenon of international migration?

So, I am calling on all of you today. Whether you are based in capital, Geneva or New York. Whether you work for a big or small delegation. Whether you represent a country of origin, transit or destination. And whether this process is deemed a priority or not by your capitals.

Please engage. Please negotiate. Please compromise.

As with all other tests, if we don't try, we are certain to fail. And, as with all other tests, history will be our most critical judge. Please work to be on the right side of history.

I thank you.

