



**71st UN General Assembly, New York  
High Level Meeting on Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants  
19 September 2016**

**Declaration of Belgium**

Alexander De Croo, Deputy Prime Minister

- Check against delivery -

Mister President,

Belgium thanks the Secretary-General for taking the initiative to convene this important High Level Meeting.

We especially welcome the adoption of the New York Declaration and its two annexes.

These texts are **important first steps** towards a **true multilateral answer** to tackle uncontrolled migration flows and respond to the question of refugees.

Yet, our work has only started.

Today, we are launching a common effort to elaborate two new compacts by 2018.

One to set the rules to foster safe, legal and orderly migration.

The second to establish shared responsibilities and true international solidarity to tackle the global refugee crisis.

Indeed, **“shared responsibility”** and **“solidarity”** are for Belgium the **two guiding principles, both with regard to refugees as to migrants.**

- Solidarity with countries of origin and transit countries;

- Solidarity with host countries by accepting better spreading of asylum seekers and by assisting countries that face illegal and uncontrolled migration and refugee flows;
- Solidarity and shared international responsibility to end war and violent conflicts, which force millions to flee their homes looking for safer and secure places not always willing or ready to host them;
- And, as important, the responsibility of all governments to do everything they possibly can to prevent that their citizens are forced to flee their homes or to migrate.

Migration has to be **a positive choice, not a necessity**.

Only by **tackling the root causes** of irregular migration and forced displacement, we will create the conditions for safe, legal and orderly migration.

To better understand these root causes, Belgium will organize this Thursday – together with the Government of Mali, the International Organization for Migration and the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data – a **high-level event on the use of data to better understand migration**. We hope many will join us.

Another fundamental principle is the **indivisible and universal character of human rights**. Especially in these challenging times, we cannot put human rights between brackets, not the rights of migrants, not the rights of refugees, and especially not the rights women and children, who are often the most vulnerable groups.

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Mister President,

Belgium strongly commits itself to a powerful and global response to these important challenges.

We are strongly committed, with the UN but also with our European, Atlantic and other allies, to foster **a peace agreement for the Syrian conflict**. That implies the military and political defeat of the so-called Islamic State.

Belgium is also strongly engaged in the European efforts to build partnerships around migration, we support the EUNAVFOR operation in the Mediterranean and the EU Emergency Fund for Africa, of which Belgium is the second largest donor country.

This year, our financial contribution to **humanitarian programs for refugees** has reached **92 million euros**. For Belgium, this is an **historic high**. Of those 92 million, 65 million are in support of Syrian refugees, an increase of 25% compared to 2015.

At the same time, we are focussing our international development policies on the **least developed countries (LDCs)**. We have decided to spend half of our Official Development Aid (ODA) in LDCs, to reduce the vulnerabilities of displaced people and to help their integration in host communities.

In our own country, we have welcomed **last year 45.583 refugees**. And this year, our host and resettlement capacity will exceed 20.000.

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Mister President,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the distant and remote peace of this room in the United Nations Headquarters, we are adopting today the New York Declaration.

A declaration that goes **beyond mere symbolism**.

The New York Declaration guides us to **international obligations**.

To protect the young girl who's on the run and who lives in a place she cannot call home.

To give hope to the family who only knows the shelter of her improvised tent.

And to offer a future to the child who has never known life outside refugee camps.

No-one can escape this historic responsibility. Not one leader, not one country, not one government.

I thank you.