



**The Permanent Mission of Iceland
to the United Nations**

**STATEMENT by
H.E. Ms. Lilja Alfreðsdóttir
Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade**

**United Nations Summit for
Refugees and Migrants**

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Mr. Secretary-General,

Human mobility is not, in itself, a bad thing. Far from it.

As the Foreign Minister of Iceland, I stand here today because, eleven hundred years ago, a group of Norse men and women embarked on a risky journey to seek a new life for themselves. Iceland, an island then completely unpopulated, became their new home.

Many of you could share similar stories. Societies have benefited from the movement of people, indeed have been formed because groups of people decided to move from one place to another.

Today we are witnessing migration on an unprecedented scale. Millions of people are on the move because they see no other alternative; they live in extreme poverty, lack access to basic needs, they have been forcibly displaced, or they are fleeing war.

The numbers speak for themselves: Today roughly 65 million people are forcibly displaced, including over 21 million refugees, 3 million asylum-seekers and over 40 million internally displaced persons.

Mr. Secretary-General,

We can only address the current trends in migration, and lessen the suffering of those on the run from the scourge of war, by addressing root causes.

I cannot stress this enough. Where inequality is the cause we must seek to increase equality. We must also eradicate extreme poverty and

work to ensure access to opportunity. At the same time, we must ensure an adequate and just framework for the movement of people, both in legal terms and practical.

We will likely find that much of the movement we see is ultimately manageable, even beneficial to both individuals and societies. However, in order to help those fleeing under great duress now, the international community must do a much better job in addressing the underlying problems, most importantly climate change and war.

At the World Humanitarian Summit in May a particular message was repeated over and over again: We must protect civilians in war and bring urgent relief to those suffering from conflict. We must have the political will to end conflicts such as the one being fought in Syria. We cannot allow further escalation.

The Security Council bears the heaviest responsibility for conflict prevention and finding political solutions to ongoing conflicts. In my view, the Council needs to act with more unison, more urgency and more concern for ordinary people.

I encourage everyone at this table to continue to support the international and humanitarian organizations assisting refugees in conflict areas and their neighboring states.

Iceland has, in 2016, provided 2,4 million USD to UNHCR for its Syria Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan and the 2016 UNHCR Syria Humanitarian Response Plan. We are preparing to receive

Syrian refugees, in cooperation with UNHCR's resettlement program, adding to those that arrived earlier this year.

Finally, I would like to underscore the importance of gender equality as a powerful and necessary lever for preventing and resolving conflict, and for making peace sustainable. First and foremost, it is women's right to have a seat at the peace negotiating table – equal to that of men.

Let us keep that in mind as we move forward. It should not be an afterthought, secondary to other matters that may seem to some more pressing. On the contrary, working towards gender equality will help solve some of the problems the world is faced with today and bring about a more humane world.

Thank you.