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STATEMENT

BY

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AT THE

**59TH PLENARY MEETING
OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

ON

**AGENDA ITEM 130:
"GLOBAL AWARENESS OF THE TRAGEDIES OF
IRREGULAR MIGRANTS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN BASIN,
WITH SPECIFIC EMPHASIS ON SYRIAN ASYLUM SEEKERS"**

Friday, November 20, 2015
United Nations, New York

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Mr. President,

Thank you for giving me the floor.

My delegation welcomes your initiative to hold this debate on the item under consideration.

We believe it should have been convened much earlier in view of the enormity and complexity of the problem.

The delay has given rise to conspiracy theories and analysis of the issue characterized predictably by omissions and distortions in the mainstream media especially in Europe.

My delegation is convinced that the tragedies of migrants and asylum-seekers is a global problem.

It is not specific to any particular country or region.

Migrants are abandoning the Middle East and Africa and migrating to Europe. Others leave Central America for the United States. This is a humanitarian crisis.

Nevertheless, Kenya is ready to lend its weight constructively to the debate focusing specifically on Syrian asylum seekers.

Mr. President,

My delegation notes that most of the discourse, whether on refugees, migrants or asylum-seekers lacks a context in terms of the influx and the root causes of the problem.

The dominant narrative increasingly determining Government policies in the destinations of the migrants and asylum-seekers concentrates on their immediate problems, barriers in their way, and Governments difficulties in coping.

The crisis has become less a product of political conflict and more a cultural battlefield.

The trenches are dug along ethnic lines against the barbaric hordes of uncivilized brown-skinned invaders arriving as a "swarm" as described in certain quarters.

Others call it an "avalanche" that must be stopped immediately.

Most unfortunately, this is the position espoused vocally by the far right throughout Europe.

This is depraved morality.

Surely, human beings cannot be depicted and treated this way. That is not humanity.

The migrants and asylum-seekers from Syria and elsewhere deserve to be treated with dignity, compassion and protection in conformity with international standards.

None of us should reject all responsibility for the hundreds of thousands of these migrants. This would lead to a humanitarian catastrophe.

What is required is solidarity. Not fences, deportations or amending national asylum laws.

Mr. President,

As host to 605,364 persons of concern and a victim of terrorist attacks, Kenya shares the concern for national security.

The recent terrorist atrocities in Turkey, Lebanon and Paris; and more recently in Nigeria, and today in Mali, underscore the priority each and every one of us here attaches to national security.

However, it must not be used to victimize people who are victims. They include women, children and all those with special needs.

They are innocent people. The majority are fleeing war in Syria to seek safety.

My delegation is convinced restrictive measures such as fast-tracking screening of asylum seekers without due process; sending them back to third countries or even detaining them is no solution.

You cannot pick the migrants you want whereas you do not like others.

What is needed is to consider long-term measures. This is a problem that is not going away any time soon.

I do not know whether this will reassure you or put some of you on edge.

Whether we like it or not, migrants and asylum-seekers from Syria will keep on coming unless we find a political settlement to the conflict in that country.

This is the reality.

Mr. President,

My delegation believes the efficiency of the asylum system will be key to addressing the problem of migrants and asylum-seekers in the Mediterranean basin whether they are specifically from Syria or elsewhere.

National asylum systems are there to decide which asylum-seekers actually qualify for international protection. However, as I mentioned earlier, they will require proper due process.

We must respond to the pleas of UNHCR for increased and improved support in the countries of first asylum, such as Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey. They host more than 4 million Syrians.

In comparison, the so-called migrant crisis in Europe – especially the numbers being bandied around are but a drop in the ocean.

Kenya therefore, welcomes the change in approach to humanitarian funding highlighted in UNHCR reports.

We note that global humanitarian funding has not kept pace with accelerated needs.

This is an area that we need to work on seriously. Particularly the involvement of development actors at every stage of displacement.

In this respect, the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan 2015-2016 (3RP) for the serious crisis, led by the UNHCR and UNDP can serve as a useful framework.

However, we need to upscale the funding in view of the fact that the number of migrants and asylum-seekers have continued to increase.

Finally, **Mr. President**, my delegation is convinced that in order to avoid some of these situations such as those of the Syrian migrants and asylum-seekers, we have to seriously think twice in future, on how each one of us defines our own interests and policies.

I thank you for your attention!