

FINAL AS DELIVERED
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Excellencies. Fellow panellists. Ladies and gentlemen.

Every person needs a sense of belonging. To feel welcome. To feel included.

Last month, I met a group of young men from Afghanistan, who have migrated to Sweden. Some came alone, unaccompanied...others with their families. They told me of their struggles to fit in, and their desire to help other migrant children also yearning to belong. And they spoke of the welcome they received in Sweden, which has made all the difference as they adjusted to their new lives.

Their journey personifies the challenge facing the world today — to support people to move safely and by choice...and to help them make the most of the opportunities and support available to them.

Especially children and young people. No group of migrants is more at risk.

Today, there are 50 million children on the move — more than half have been driven from their homes by conflict. Millions more are driven away by extreme poverty — desperate for a better, safer life, or to reunite with family.

Whether travelling alone or with their families, children on the move are especially vulnerable. Faced with very limited pathways to move safely, many have no choice but to risk their lives in dangerous, harrowing journeys.

They are vulnerable to **immigration laws and practices** that do not allow them to move or reunite with their parents — tearing families apart and leaving millions of children separated from their parents.

They are vulnerable to **immigration detention**, with more than 100 countries known to detain children.

They are vulnerable to “**falling between the cracks**” of basic social services — of even their basic human rights. Denied birth registration... education...and access to health care and protection services.

They are vulnerable to **trafficking**, with children representing a full one-third of trafficking victims worldwide.

And throughout, they are vulnerable to **racism, xenophobia and destructive social attitudes**, especially when they do not speak the local language. These can deny migrants the sense of belonging and inclusion that is so important to all of us, and to the young men I met in Sweden.

No single state or organization can “manage migration” alone. We need governments, NGOs, UN agencies and the private sector all lending their resources, energy and ideas to design solutions and programmes that can help migrants make the most of the opportunities available to them.

The time to do so is now. Seizing this opportunity is a matter of choice — a political choice. Supporting migrants is not only the right thing to do for children — but it is in Member States’ best interests, as we seek to shape a more inclusive and even peaceful world.

There is already broad support for collaboration to remove the barriers created by policies, practices and attitudes that put migrant children in danger. For example, the Initiative for Child Rights in the Global Compacts is an alliance co-led by Save the Children and Terre des Hommes. It brings together private foundations, civil society groups, UN agencies like UNICEF and governments to identify practical solutions for Member States to support the rights and opportunities of children on the move.

UNICEF believes we can build on efforts like this, and deliver real change to millions of children — refugees and migrants...children moving regularly or irregularly...alone or with their parents.

We urge renewed and united action in **four** key areas.

First — we must design **child-sensitive laws and practices** that allow children to move safely, protecting and supporting them throughout their journey. Italy and Germany, for example, are improving standards for reception centres and reducing the time children spend in them. Fifteen countries across West Africa are working together to adopt region-wide procedures for children on the move across borders, to identify, assist and reintegrate the most vulnerable. And Thailand recently granted full access to public education and basic health for all migrant children, regardless of status.

Second — we must **end the immigration detention of children**. Many countries like Mexico, Spain, Zambia and Portugal are using alternatives to detention, including open reception centres for children that include vital health, counselling and education services. Other countries like Uganda and Ireland are prohibiting immigration detention of children altogether. And Bulgaria has recently banned the detention of unaccompanied migrant children.

Third — we must continue **improving the data and evidence** on children and young migrants. UNICEF and IOM have joined forces to gather and analyse data on child displacement and migration to better shape and target our programmes and policies. And we worked with our sister UN agencies, OECD and Eurostat in last month's call to action to better co-ordinate the data we collect.

And fourth — we must pay special attention to the **needs of young people**: their education, their training, their eventual employment.

UNICEF will soon launch a Global Agenda for Young People, to focus our collective efforts on the 1.2 billion youth in the world today — the largest cohort in history. Along with our partners in government, non-profits and the private sector, we want to co-create and accelerate new programmes that will get every young person — including young migrants — in school, training or age-appropriate employment by 2030.

The needs of today's 50 million children who have migrated across borders or been forcibly displaced — an incredible pool of talent and potential — must be front-and centre. We must scale-up not just education and skills training, but counselling and programmes to get more girls into school.

Imagine how many scientists, doctors, entrepreneurs, teachers and innovators are among them. Imagine the contributions they could make to their host communities, if given the chance.

Imagine also the lost futures of the 700 children who drowned while crossing the Mediterranean Sea in 2016 — their potential forever extinguished because we, as a global community, were unable to support them.

Or the futures of the children lost to trafficking, exploitation and abuse.
Or the migrant children who will never feel at home... never know the inside of a classroom... never gain the skills they need...never build the future they want.

It is for these young people that we are here today. In many ways, migration is a litmus test of international co-operation. A test of our ability to work across borders, sectors and institutions to create new coalitions and new programmes to support migrants, as well as the communities they join — yes, importantly, the communities they join.

We all have something to bring to the table.

For our part, UNICEF stands ready to share our expertise and experience. From our collaboration with IOM on a handbook that will be released this year that provides guidance on protecting and assisting vulnerable migrants...to our technical support to local and regional authorities in Europe and Central America to strengthen programmes, policies and laws that respond to migrants' needs...to our networks that bring together governments, businesses, faith groups, local authorities and NGOs to identify and scale-up innovative solutions for people on the move. It should be local, and inclusive of civil society, business and government.

Let us make 2018 the year when we, as a global community, came together to scale-up those innovative solutions. As they stand up for their rights — and their futures — let us stand with them.
