

Mister Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We talk. We sign papers and agreements. But now we need to act - we need funds.

And we need to implement the resolutions and commitments which we - the international community - have agreed through meetings such as the United Nations Summit on Sustainable Development Goals of September last year, the World Humanitarian Summit in May this year, and today. We recognise that that the issues of migration and refugee movements – war, poverty, climate change – are inter related problems which need to be addressed by combining and different program elements.

We note that respect for human rights today is lower than at any time since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1949. There are many more violations, documented in chilling detail in the reports of international institutions, NGOs and the international media.

We strongly believe that no human being is illegal and therefore she and he have rights. These rights are not being respected. If you take away the status of a human being, you take away his basic rights. This is how refugees and migrants are being treated on their long and dangerous journeys.

As refugees and migrant flows explode across Europe, most transit countries, overwhelmed, have reacted by nearly closing their borders – setting up strict controls and daily entry limits. We agree with regulations, but carried out with a humane perspective.

On their route, migrants and refugees are often herded into temporary shelters of one sort or another. Conditions are subhuman. Human dignity is nowhere. Human rights are nowhere either.

In our reception facilities in Germany we have evidence that children are physically tortured by the traffickers on the migrant routes. We know that they do this to get more money from the parents. They will carry these scars for the rest of their lives. We know, too, that the women are violated. This is what happens on the migrant routes, by traffickers who are entirely unscrupulous and lawless. There is only one motive for those who engage in this kind of activity: profit.

The fight against smugglers, traffickers and corruption must become an international obligation.

We also face terrible situations for the refugees and for the volunteers and personals. The Order of Malta has been saving lives in the Mediterranean Sea, off Italy's southern coasts, since 2008. Working with the Italian Coast Guard, Navy and Guardia di Finanza, our medical teams have rescued over 55,000 people. In the three months at the turn of this year, following the dramatic influx of migrants from Turkey to the Greek islands, we launched a similar operation in the Aegean Sea. Rescue is often traumatic - our volunteers have sometimes to challenge, between whom to grab desperately from the water in those vital moments, often in high seas, and who is left to drown. The coordination between the European Union Naval Force-Mediterranean Operation Sophia (EUNAVFOR MED), the Italian forces, NGOs and us is very effective. But the resources are not enough.

And for all those who have survived, their problems do not stop on arriving on safe shores. The journey is still long and dangerous. The administrative paperwork of those in transit is never rapid. Why? Again, the facilities are overwhelmed. There is not enough trained staff to deal with the constant arrivals. Legal requirements in any asylum or host country are not processed quickly – the law does not move fast. These processes need to be reviewed, to provide more funding support, improved but less complicated legal requirements for persons in transit and more trained personnel,

Training is the key. All officials dealing with migrants and refugees at the grassroots level must be trained not only in processes but also in human rights issues and psycho-social support. They must be aware of the threats that particular groups face such as children and women and have the mechanisms in place to deal with them.

Dear Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, indeed we have work to do but together we will provide to all a better future and a shared welfare.

Thank you for your attention.

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