

Address by Pat the Cope Gallagher TD, Leas Cheann Comhairle (Deputy Speaker) of Dáil Éireann

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General Debate on "Strengthening the global regime for migrants and refugees: the need for evidence-based policy solutions"

- Madame President, fellow Speakers, colleagues and friends, it is both a pleasure and an honour to have this opportunity to address this assembly today in my capacity as Deputy Speaker of Dáil Éireann and leader of the Irish delegation.
- I am particularly pleased that my few words to you today relate to the issue of migration, a topic which has a deep resonance with Ireland, given that we are a nation whose history is interwoven with migratory flows. Our people left our shores through past periods of famine and conflict, and as a result of unemployment. And they found hope and made homes wherever they went, in America and elsewhere – contributing to societies wherever they went, and in many cases maintaining their heritage and their connections with home. That is why today we have a Minister for the Diaspora in Ireland, and a worldwide network of diaspora groups and communities that form an important part of who we are.

- More recently, Ireland has become home to more migrants from elsewhere than ever before, and today over 17% of our population was born outside of the country –finding hope and making homes in Ireland and contributing to our society in many ways.
- That is why Ireland was proud to co-facilitate the negotiations which led to the adoption of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants in 2016. The spirit of that Declaration - with its focus on ensuring an approach to the challenges posed by large-scale human movement that is not only more coordinated but above all more humane - must continue to guide the current development of Global Compacts on both Migration and Refugees.
- We believe that full respect of human rights must be at the centre of all policies addressing all forms of migration, not just in the context of large movements. The principle of *non-refoulement* has to be respected. The protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms of all migrants regardless of their migration status is paramount.
- As Ireland’s history and experience shows, migrants and diaspora communities can play a key role in promoting development in their ancestral homelands while contributing

positively to the economic prosperity of the countries where they have settled.

- We believe strongly that well managed migration systems which facilitate the orderly mobility of migrants to and from countries of origin and destination provide the key to maximising the benefits of migration.
- It is also important to reduce irregular migration and to tackle the root causes that leads to this, such as climate change and conflict, and the illegal networks that facilitate it, such as people smugglers. Creating and expanding sustainable legal migration pathways is crucial to this work.
- Ireland supports the central importance of the principle of sovereignty and the right of member states to protect their borders and decide whom to grant permits to stay in their territories and under what conditions, in full respect of international law. It is crucial that the Compact recognises that determining the migratory status is national competence, in accordance with international obligations.
- States have not only the right but also an obligation to their citizens to manage their borders. The challenge we face, and which the Global Compacts will address, is to find the balance

that allows us to meet that obligation while taking advantage of the opportunities that migration offers.

- Migration can be an emotive issue and it is precisely for that reason that policy choices must be based on clear evidence. Neither irrational fear nor irrational exuberance is a good guide to policy. Efforts to develop and disseminate evidence and data are therefore very important and need to be supported. The work of agencies such as the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organisation for Migration should be commended in that regard. Both organisations must continue to be supported both financially and politically through the Global Compact for Migration. In this respect, a leading and coordinating role of the IOM in both the implementation and the follow-up and review process would be desirable.
- Many people in the developed world, perhaps most, have no idea that developing countries host the overwhelming majority of the world's refugees and asylum seekers. We need to work together to ensure that our publics become better informed about the reality of displacement in today's world.
- It is clear that significant resources will need to be mobilised to meet the humanitarian and development needs not only of those who have sought shelter in other countries but also of host

communities, which are frequently poor and marginalised themselves.

- In conclusion, Ireland believes that the text of the Global Compact for Migration requires a greater distinction between regular and irregular migration, and between migrants and refugees. This is important if we are to meet the challenge of developing robust managed migration systems that both facilitate the orderly mobility of migrants and reduce irregular migration.
- Finally colleagues, I must commend the important role played by Ireland's naval service in saving lives in the Mediterranean, with over 17,000 refugees rescued by Irish craft . I wish today to pay tribute to the work of Irish sailors and defence forces personnel in this hugely important role in the Mediterranean, as well as paying tribute to all other European naval services deployed in this work. While Ireland's naval service is rescuing many refugees, one death is one too many, and I urge us all to redouble our efforts to find a practical, long-term solution to this crisis.
- I look forward to our own discussions here in this forum, and to exploring further the role of parliaments in this important matter.

- To conclude in Irish, colleagues, tá áthas mór orm bheith anseo inniu and tá súil agam go mbeidh dul chun cinn a dhéanamh le duinn go leor againn– I am delighted to speak here today among friends and colleagues and I hope that progress will result from our discussions at this assembly.
- Go raibh maith agaibh go leor. Thank you all.