

**KEYNOTE SPEECH BY
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**HIGH –LEVEL EVENT ON THE WORLD HUMANITARIAN SUMMIT
HUMANITARIAN ACTION: A FORWARD-LOOKING AGENDA
70TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
(30 SEPTEMBER 2015, NEW YORK)**

Mr. Secretary General,
Distinguished Colleagues and Panelists,
Representatives of the Global Humanitarian Community,

At the outset, I would like to thank my dear friend, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for organizing this high-level event on the World Humanitarian Summit.

The Summit is his own initiative. And it will be held for the first time in history.

We therefore commend Mr. Secretary-General and his team for taking this initiative.

It will indeed be a distinct privilege and honour for us to host this historic summit in Istanbul on 23-24 May 2016.

Dear colleagues,

I firmly believe in a principle:

Any diplomacy that does not touch the souls of the human beings, that does not speak to human conscience and that does not have a humanitarian essence, will not bring lasting solutions.

We in Turkey have a strong tradition of responding passionately to the peoples in need.

As early as in the late 15th century, Turks provided a safe harbor to hundreds of thousands of exiled populations fleeing from persecution.

Anatolia being at the crossroads of Africa, Europe and Asia, have welcomed for centuries peoples in dire need, regardless of their religious, ethnic or linguistic backgrounds.

This heritage sets the deep roots of our humanitarian diplomacy, the natural reaction of Turkish nation to respond to all types of humanitarian crises, ranging from conflict situations to natural disasters and epidemics, such as Ebola.

As the Turkish saying goes; we cannot eat when our neighbor is hungry. We cannot sleep in peace if a baby is shivering outside perimeter of our walls.

In this endeavor, while extending our caring hands globally, we host millions of affected people fleeing in grand despair from their homelands, which makes Turkey the biggest refugee-hosting nation in the world.

This challenging experience makes us see the current issues through the lenses of not only donors, but also of those affected.

It is true that the global humanitarian system has made considerable progress throughout history, to the common benefit of the peoples in need.

Yet, given the scales of humanitarian crises today, it is undeniable that the international community is facing tremendous challenges in the humanitarian field.

With 3,5 billion US Dollars of official development aid, and with 1,6 billion US Dollars of overseas humanitarian assistance, making her the third largest humanitarian donor in the world, Turkey has become a leading actor and a trustable partner in this field.

Yet there is a need for many more emerging donors and an ever increasing support from the traditional donors to cope with the rapidly increasing demand.

Turkey shares the view that the current international humanitarian system can no longer adequately address the increasing dimensions and complexities of today's humanitarian crises, the great majority of which are conflict related.

Such crises transcend borders as the recent tragic exodus of refugees has bitterly reminded the international community of its responsibilities and its moral obligations once again.

It is our moral obligation to help those in dire need. Saving them is saving humanity. To join such efforts is also the common responsibility of each and every member of this august house representing the world community.

As all these present humanitarian crises and tragedies sadly show, it is high-time that the world community takes its long-awaited responsibilities in a holistic manner.

Thus, the World Humanitarian Summit will be very timely.

Difficult times require courageous ideas and decisions. Our common objective is in fact simple: to better respond to humanitarian crises to save lives, and thus, save humanity.

But, how? That is the challenge we are faced with.

We, as the host country, are fully engaged and committed to make the summit a real success.

Summit outcomes jointly endorsed by all humanitarian actors, should clearly set the future agenda for the international community while identifying the issues to be followed up.

The preparations in this respect continue in full swing under the UN leadership through a multi-stake holder process.

We fully trust the UN Secretary General in this process which can be further enriched by the member states as appropriate.

We look forward to the upcoming global consultations in Geneva and the report of the UN Secretary General.

Based on our experiences and the lessons-learned in the field, we have already shared our ideas to contribute to this joint venture for setting the future agenda to better respond to ever-increasing and diversifying humanitarian crises of our era.

Dear colleagues,

In this respect, let me underline some of the ideas that we think are of particular importance.

Firstly, given the complexity of the present crises, the humanitarian-development nexus needs to be strengthened.

Let us work on concrete modalities aiming at how to best ensure the combined use of humanitarian assistance with development tools, where appropriate, to support resilience, particularly in the context of crises of a recurrent and/or protracted nature.

Such crises, be it natural or man-made, inflict destructive impacts on the countries in question.

In fact, the combined use of humanitarian and development assistance programmes in an integrated strategy has been instrumental in the success of the Turkish humanitarian diplomacy, particularly towards countries of sub-Saharan Africa.

Through this approach, these countries have increased their resilience against recurrent crises as famine, drought or flooding which are aggravated by the lack of basic infrastructure.

Secondly, the tragic waves of refugees is a fact we can no longer neglect or ignore.

This is a global humanitarian catastrophe, which we haven't seen since the Second World War.

Humanitarian crises triggered by conflicts bring about serious impacts not only in the country of origin, but also in its neighbors and beyond.

In the face of mass population movements, it is high time that global actions on refugee issues should be considered at the summit with particular emphasis on assisting refugees and their host countries.

Providing medical aid into conflict zones, setting up water and sanitation facilities, and protecting victims are crucial to save lives; but we must also think about how to safeguard the education and livelihoods of those who survive.

This requires a holistic developmental approach.

The international community should not see refugee numbers only as statistics: Every single number is in fact a person forced to flee either despotism, terror, war or effects of a natural disaster and simply aiming to survive.

We should not turn our backs to the fundamental rights of these people who cannot be held responsible for what they are going through.

Otherwise the universal values, such as democracy, human rights, freedom and peace will inevitably be the next victims to our indifference.

In this context, as you all know, the biggest humanitarian crisis of such protracted nature in the present era stems from the conflict in Syria.

The total number of Syrians living in Turkey has exceeded 2 million. 260.000 of them are accommodated in 25 temporary protection centers.

Those in camps are provided with food, non-food items, health and education services, as well as psychological assistance, vocational training and social activities.

Almost two million Syrians living outside the camps also enjoys a protective regime, benefiting from free health care.

Turkey's total expenditure so far for this care and effort is rapidly edging toward 8 billion USD, with little contribution from the international community.

In line with our humanitarian responsibilities and in the absence of a concerted international effort to this end, we have developed a multi-fold strategy, from the very beginning to help these unfortunate people.

Against this background, it is now promising to see the emergence of an increasing awareness in some western countries, albeit late, to take similar responsibilities, as the refugee waves arrive at their soil.

The third important issue is related to how best and efficiently we could use our limited resources.

While the global humanitarian system is running out of funds, affected people are running out of time.

Thus, we believe well-defined models and modalities are needed to ensure better coordination not only among the relevant UN bodies operating in the field, but also between them and all other stake-holders.

Such coordination becomes crucially urgent to intervene in crises in a timely and efficient way, avoiding duplication or overlapping.

In the same vein, ensuring financial support is equally crucial.

Mostly, when there is a humanitarian emergency, the funding raised turns to be too little, too late. Yes, one can also talk about donor fatigue. But, that cannot be an excuse when lives are at stake.

Thus, it would be timely to focus on the search for new financing modalities at the global level to respond to humanitarian emergencies without delay.

We are hopeful as all these issues have already been discussed so far during the summit consultation process and found strong support among the stakeholders.

There are many striking and useful ideas which can be championed by the member states.

As the Summit motto clearly reflects, it is our *common humanity* to save, thus it should be our *shared responsibility* to act.

No nation is immune from humanitarian crises. Thus, representing our countries at the level of heads of state or government would enable the world community to voice our common commitments for our common future, for humanity.

We may be a member of different groups such as G7, G20, G77 etc.

But this time let us come together and act as G-all so that no kids like Aylan Kurdi face such tragedies again.

It is with this sense of urgency that I call upon all Member States and stakeholders to support this historic process and to participate in the Summit at the highest level to show our global responsibility as well as ownership for the humanity.

Thank you.