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Statement by Mr. Sikander Khan, Director, Geneva Office of Emergency Programmes, UNICEF

Madam Chair, High Commissioner, Distinguished Delegates,

Today more children are on the move than ever before - more than 50 million is UNICEF's recent estimates. 28 million of these children are fleeing violence, conflict and insecurity. These are truly staggering numbers.

Worldwide one in every two refugees is a child. And the numbers continue to rise every day. Among the more than half a million Rohingya who have fled Myanmar for Bangladesh since the end of August, around 60 per cent are children.

An alarming numbers of children are moving alone. In the last two years, at least 300,000 unaccompanied and separated children were registered moving across borders. This is a partial picture as data is often scarce, incomplete or lacking.

In the Americas, more than 100,000 unaccompanied children have been apprehended at the Mexico-US border in the last two years. In Africa, years of violence by Boko Haram in the Lake Chad basin, have left 1.4 million children displaced and at least one million trapped in hard-to-reach areas. In the Horn of Africa, more than 90,000 unaccompanied and separated children were displaced internally or across borders in 2015.

Whatever the drivers behind children moving on their own, they find very few opportunities to access protection or to move legally. These children are extremely vulnerable and they face multiple dangers on the route. According to a report released last month by UNICEF and IOM, *Harrowing Journeys*, almost 8 in 10 children and youth on the Central Mediterranean route reported direct experiences of abuse and exploitation - many may be victims of trafficking.

Madam Chair

Far too many children continue to face violations of their rights during their flight as well as in the countries they eventually reach.

Refugee children are 5 times more likely to be out of school than other children. Only 1 in 2 refugee children is enrolled in primary school, and less than 1 in 4 refugee youth are enrolled in secondary education. The average length of protracted displacement has reached 17 years – this is an entire childhood.

The lives of millions of children – without them even knowing it – will depend on the commitments and the way forward that will be agreed in the context of the Global Compacts on Refugees.

UNICEF is committed to do our part to deliver for children uprooted:

- leveraging our existing relationship with national and local governments, sister UN agencies and civil society organizations,
- engaging refugee and host communities themselves and expanding support through a whole-of-society approach .
- Strengthening our partnership with UNHCR to roll out the CRRF.

If we are ambitious enough – and focus on solutions - much progress can be achieved fulfilling the promise for:

- Every child to be protected.
- Every refugee child to go to school.
- No child to be left stateless.
- No child to be detained or discriminated against because of who they are or where they come from.

Ladies and Gentlemen

For this to happen, societies and communities also need to be aware about the situation of children on the move and supportive of policies that protect and support them wherever they are.

That is why UNICEF has launched the Children Uprooted campaign to support an Agenda for Action focused on six priority areas: protection; alternatives to detention; family unity; access to services; addressing the drivers of child migration; and combatting xenophobia and discrimination.

But concretely – what can be done? Let me name a few concrete examples of actionable commitments that would make a difference in the lives of millions of children

1. Commitments by states to increase access to refugee resettlement, family reunification and other safe and legal pathways for children to seek refuge or migrate.

2. Commitments by partners – including UNICEF - to support host governments in integrating displaced populations and ensuring access to services for all refugee and migrant children in an equitable, sustainable and integrated manner – in particular to:
 - Provide access to quality education within two months of arrival, including early childhood development.
 - Ensure access to health care and psychosocial support, including at reception facilities.
 - Ensure access to justice.
 - Deliver on birth registration as a child’s basic right and key to preventing childhood statelessness

Madam Chair, Distinguished Delegates.

The CRRF presents a unique opportunity to move in the right direction, not only for refugee children but also to work towards more equitable approaches benefiting all vulnerable children in communities hosting refugees. We are committed to work together with you all to make 2018 a turning point moment for the fate of millions of children uprooted.

Children’s rights do not ‘end’ at national border. Their rights move with them. Let us continue to work together to protect children on the move and to protect their rights.

I thank you.