

**Message for the 2012 “Global Hearing on Refugees and Migration”
4/5 June 2012 at the Peace Palace in The Hague, Netherlands**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I want to send my best wishes to all of you attending the Global Hearing on Refugees and Migration.

It is ten years since I had the pleasure of travelling to the Netherlands to welcome in person the adoption of the “The Declaration of The Hague on the Future of Refugee and Migration Policy”.

The Declaration was an important moment in shaping our collective response to an issue which continues to affect millions of individuals as well as communities and countries across the world.

It set out the importance of safeguarding the human rights of migrants and refugees and of the need to see their arrival as opportunities rather than as threats to our societies.

They are lessons which are perhaps even more important today than they were a decade ago.

Migration is continuing to rise both between and within continents.

There is, of course, nothing new about migration. It is as old as the history of humanity itself.

It is fuelled by famine, by disasters and by conflict. But it can also be driven by the natural desire to build a better life for yourselves and your families.

Today’s migrants, too, are often responding to demands for labor across the globe.

When times are good, we tend to look more favourably on the new arrivals and focus on the skills and energy they bring.

When times are tougher –as they are now in many parts of the world – the welcome can be more strained or replaced by hostility.

We must not allow our policies in these important areas to be dictated by fear or allow refugees and migrants to be cast as scapegoats.

While migration raises many complicated questions, we must not forget that the remarkable benefits they bring – benefits which are lost by exclusion.

We must remember, too, that our migration and refugee policies expose our values as a society.

These policies, of course, need global co-operation as the Declaration recognized.

Yet even now in a world more interconnected than ever, there remains steady resistance to the idea that all nations share the responsibility for addressing these challenges.

As we commemorate the 10th anniversary of “The Declaration of The Hague”, we need to find ways to step up our efforts to build understanding and alliances so we can find fair and sustainable solutions to the challenge and opportunities of migration and refugees.

Your work and the Hague Process continues to be central to our hopes of achieving this goal.

I wish this important conference every success.