

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Migration is as old as mankind. It will never stop, but we do need to manage it properly. During the last fifteen years, the number of international migrants and refugees worldwide, reaching 244 million in 2015, has grown at faster rate than the world's population.

I'm the son of refugees myself. My parents fled terror in my homeland in WWII. While not feeling always welcomed after arriving in Sweden my family were given a chance. As a refugee child, I had a chance to acquire a good education, although not in my mother tongue.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Children are at the heart of migration influx and one of the most vulnerable groups. 28 million children all around the world have been forcibly displaced and there are another 20 million children on the move. One in eight migrants is a child. They face many risks. In many cases migrant and refugee children fall through the cracks of asylum and immigration procedures. This results in limited access to justice, to education, health and social services.

Taking care of migrant children's education is our best investment for their future. Education limits the risk of alienation and disaffection. Prospects of employment for the educated helps to prevent involvement in criminal or extremist activities. Education is also the cornerstone of Estonia's policy towards migrant children. Let me give you some examples: 1) In the refugee camp in Zaatar, Jordan, Estonia equipped computer classes and provided computer lessons for primary school children in the camp; 2) Local governments in Estonia that have resettled Syrian refugees from Turkey or relocated refugees from Greece, have immediately ensured that all children, from the age of 1.5 to 17, receive education, either in kindergarten, elementary or primary school.

Thus, we strongly support the UN and UNICEF in particular, to achieve the key priority of getting refugee and migrant children into school. In 2016, Sven Jürgenson, Permanent Representative of Estonia to the UN has served as President of the UNICEF Executive Board.

Children's rights have been one of Estonia's priorities as the chairman of the Council of Europe.

I sincerely hope that this event today will help to shape our discussion in giving migrant children the chance they deserve.