"Settlement Houses of Hope"
2016 Berlin Declaration

We are:
- More than 250 participants of conference of the 2016 International Federation of Settlements and Neighborhood Centers;
- Representatives of a global network of 4,000 organizations, and hundreds of thousands of active citizens, volunteers, students, and professionals in neighborhoods of nearly 30 countries.

We declare and challenge:
- People fleeing war, hunger, exploitation, violence, natural disasters, environmental degradation, and persecution deserve a warm welcome, as new neighbors, in the cities and districts where they arrive;
- Terrorism, xenophobia, and narrow definitions of nationalism must be rejected and must give way to investments of social cohesion in an inclusive society;
- There are legal and regulatory structures in many of our countries creating a humanitarian and 'state crisis,' rather than a 'refugee crisis,' that are not constructive and need to be countered;
- The significant correlation between a rapidly changing environment and the increasingly poor conditions people live in and escape from must be considered as a catalyst for massive migration worldwide.

We call on and support our local, regional, national, and continental politicians and leaders to:
- Actively engage in the peaceful and swift resolution of conflicts leading to these humanitarian crises;
- Provide these men, women, and children with decent circumstances in order for them to cope with the numerous tragedies they have encountered;
- Acknowledge and act on the 1951 UN Convention, and its 1967 Protocol, relating to the status of refugees, which has been signed by 144 countries. Many countries are neither contributing to the basic human rights of these individuals nor welcoming new neighbors. This is profound and irresponsible and calls to action on the UN Convention and Protocol;
- Observe the 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment's declaration that protects and improves the environment, which affects the well-being of people and economic development throughout the world, as changing environmental conditions directly correlate to drastic migration patterns.

When neighborhood settlement houses are strong cornerstones of communities, then they will act in moments in and out of crisis to build foundations in the lives of new neighbors who arrive at the doorsteps of our communities. Settlement Houses foster strong and reciprocal relationships and can be a network to confront inequalities between the Global North and South in order to build a more civil society.

We believe:
- We can provide local responses and solutions to global challenges;
- In inclusion over integration;
- Newcomers have strengths to offer receiving communities;
- It is incumbent on us to protect those fleeing other lands and to welcome them as new neighbors;
- By doing so, we make our communities better for everyone;
- Our role as community builders must be central to building mutual understanding, a sense of belonging, and hope for all.

Settlement Houses will take responsibility to be an active part of civil society that brings thousands of organizations and hundreds of thousands of volunteers in our local communities to take care of and welcome displaced people; we offer myriad of practical economic supports, opportunities for political advocacy and inclusion in civic participation, programs for the whole family, support services that build community and heal trauma; we are a family of Centers that network, share best practices, and engage regularly to make the world a better place. As our newly elected President Pentti Lemmetyinen said, "Times are tough, but people should not be."

This declaration was unanimously adopted at the closing plenary session of the "On the Move, At Home in the World" conference in Berlin, Germany in October 2016. This declaration aims to address local, regional, national, and continental partners in their individual and collective efforts in aiding refugees, building stronger communities, and working toward a more equitable world for all.

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