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Address to the 111. Annual meeting of IOM

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

A child is a child no difference of nationality or  
if the child crosses a border.

Hopefully we all agree to this.

But how can we ensure that millions of children in migration are treated as  
children?

That they are not channeled into parallel systems and remain indefinitely in  
'emergency mode':  
just tick the box for shelter and food, -  
this is not enough.

Being amongst the most vulnerable,  
Children in migration must have also access  
to an integrated national child protection system.

Immediate protection

**through qualified persons** is required.

Like for any other child,  
unaccompanied children in migration need to be reunited with their families in a  
place where they can be safe,  
always in the best interests of the child.

If this is not possible and while reunification efforts are made,  
they should be granted equal access  
to quality family and community-based care in the same way as nationals.  
Amongst others they should be able to go to normal schools from week one.

No parallel systems where parallel structures for eternity are built. They harm  
children.

They prevent them from developing respectful relationships with society at large.

All actors engaged in national child protection  
must work together **for all children**.

Local actors providing alternative care  
to local children can contribute with their expertise.

Let's make the best of our diverse societies  
that care professionals culturally understand the children.

Actors specialized on migration law are key  
to ensure that staff working with children in migration are equipped  
to assist children in issues related to their migration status.

In closing let me remind all of us:

A child is a child – with emotional needs.

We observe a de-emotionalisation of the issue by using only legal terms like  
unaccompanied minors etc.

Lets not allow societies to distance in such a way from the problem of the most  
vulnerable children.

A child is a child!

Thank you