European Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos calls in Geneva for more protection and admission possibilities for Syrian refugees

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Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Friends,

The conflict in Syria has entered into its fourth year, resulting in one of the worst humanitarian crises in our times.

With no perspective of a swift political solution that could bring an end to the hostilities, it is, first and foremost, our duty to continue the necessary humanitarian assistance and to show solidarity with the persons and host communities affected by the conflict.

I feel humbled by the magnitude of the challenge that the countries in the region face every day.

I want to thank in particular the authorities of Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Egypt for their continued hospitality.

But at the same time, I am also proud to recall that the EU and its Member States remain at the forefront of these humanitarian efforts. I can assure you that the European Commission will strive to continue this support.

Providing durable solutions for Syrian refugees is a joint task of the international community as a whole. The European Commission welcomes today's initiative and the efforts to keep the momentum of resettlement and admission efforts for Syrians.

I am pleased to note that so far, more than 34.000 places have been offered by EU Member States. Compared to the needs, it might appear insignificant. It is, however, the largest commitment in the history of EU resettlement efforts.

Nevertheless, I strongly believe that we can and must do more.

I want to thank High Commissioner for providing the European Commission with this opportunity to reiterate today once more its support to this initiative and to call on all resettling States, and in particular EU Member States, to provide more protection and admission possibilities for Syrian refugees in the Middle East region. As for the EU Member States, the Commission is ready to provide continued financial support to resettlement activities.

I note that the High Commissioner has been calling not only for resettlement, but he has also invited us here today to consider other forms of – at least – temporary protection.

Where resettlement is not possible, or where it could be considered not flexible enough to respond to urgently arising protection needs, humanitarian admission and all other possibilities, such as a more generous use of family reunification, as well as student or work schemes for Syrians, are worth examining.

These tools are already available to many of us and we can, and certainly should, do better in using them in a spirit of generosity and solidarity.

I also want to add that while speaking of resettlement, we also need to speak of integration. This is a critical aspect of any comprehensive approach to resettlement, if it is to be truly effective in terms of meeting the long-term protection needs of the persons, and ensuring that they have the opportunity to lead a dignified life and make a contribution to the societies receiving them.

I want to assure you of the European Commission's – and my personal – continued support.

Thank you

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