European External Action Service (EEAS)

Joint Statement ahead of World Refugee Day 2016

2016-06-19

Brussels, 19 June 2016

On the occasion of World Refugee Day, the following statement is issued by Frans Timmermans, First Vice-President for Better Regulation, Interinstitutional Relations, the Rule of Law and the Charter of Fundamental Rights, Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the Commission, Neven Mimica, Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Dimitris Avramopoulos, Commissioner for Migration and Home Affairs, and Christos Stylianides, Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management:

"An estimated 60 million persons are forcibly displaced in the world - as refugees, asylum seekers, migrants or internally displaced persons. Providing support and protection for refugees and effectively managing migration is a challenge, which requires a global response.

From families fleeing war in Syria, to those escaping conflicts in Africa, the personal fight for survival and security is driving millions of people to move from their homes. Developing countries are hosting the vast majority of the world's refugee population – over 85% – but we also feel the impact closer to home, with more than 1 million people seeking protection in the EU last year. Many vulnerable people have fallen victim to unscrupulous people smugglers and traffickers, suffering during their journey or even losing their lives.

World Refugee Day commemorates the plight of these men, women and children. It is for this reason that we are launching the #SupportRefugees campaign, with the aim to raise awareness of their situation and to demonstrate how the European Union provides tangible help.

The EU has not and will not turn a blind eye to this crisis and we will continue to share in the global efforts to address it. We are continuously looking at ways to strengthen our humanitarian response and increase our support to refugees, internally displaced people and the millions affected by crisis around the world. As the world's leading humanitarian donor, our humanitarian response has helped millions affected by the crisis in Syria: we have provided them with over €6 billion collectively from EU and Member State budgets and we will continue to pledge financial support to displaced Syrians inside and outside their country.

Overall, more than €10 billion of the EU budget for the years 2015 and 2016 has been allocated to address the refugee crisis within the EU and in third countries. In April, the European Commission set out a strategic vision on how its external action can support refugees and displaced people in long lasting crises. The Communication "Lives in Dignity: from Aid-dependence to Self-reliance" lays out an approach to prevent refugees and displaced people relying only on emergency humanitarian type assistance. In May, the World Humanitarian Summit launched a new approach to humanitarian aid, and the EU will maintain its pledge to implement the commitments it made at the Summit, including on political leadership to prevent and end conflict.

We have reinforced our efforts to save lives and provide humanitarian assistance to people affected by this crisis. We tripled our resources for search and rescue operations at sea last year, contributed to saving more than 240,000 people in the Mediterranean and we are disrupting criminal smuggling networks through Frontex joint operations, EUNAVFOR Med Operation Sophia and cooperation in the Aegean with the Turkish authorities and NATO.

It is clear that any sustainable solution requires close cooperation with countries of origin and transit and legal avenues for those fleeing conflict and persecution in order to reach Europe safely. We are working closely with Turkey to help manage refugee flows, and support the needs of the very large refugee community it hosts offering in parallel resettlement opportunities. In November 2015, EU and African leaders met in Valletta and agreed to work together to address the root causes of displacement and irregular migration. To implement the actions we agreed upon, we have established a €1.8 billion EU Trust Fund for Africa, to which an additional €500 million have been made available.

Migration will become even more central to the European external action through the new Partnership Framework we presented this month. We are working to establish strong partnerships with key countries of origin and transit and to provide support to those countries hosting large refugee populations. We aim at fostering growth in our partner countries through increased financial and operational support, but also at strengthening the rule of law and human rights: only by doing so we can contribute to their long-term economic and social development, and to peace in our broader region. With these efforts we can collectively improve the lives of so many human beings, and tackle the root causes of migration and displacement.

We look forward to the UN General Assembly High Level Meeting on Addressing Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants, which will be held in New York on 19 September. We call on all partners to strengthen the international framework for refugee protection and resettlement through global responsibility-sharing and solidarity."

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