Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

Syria Conference: closing speech by Justine Greening

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Thank you Baroness Anelay. I now have this amazing privilege of being the person that gets to wrap up this incredible conference that we've had today.

I want to start by saying a huge thank you to absolutely everybody who's contributed today, and to everyone who's been working so hard, over so many weeks and months, to put this Conference together.

On behalf of the UK Government, I'd also like to massively thank our co hosts Germany, Norway, Kuwait and the UN.

But most of all, I want to say thank you to everybody here, individuals, countries, NGOs and businesses, who came here today and pledged to stand by Syria in the weeks, months and years ahead.

I think nobody came here this morning doubting the scale of the challenge we're facing… We've heard so many speakers today talk about that.

This is not only the world's biggest and most urgent humanitarian crisis but its far-reaching consequences are touching all of us. The unprecedented people flow. A whole generation of children at risk of being lost to conflict.

And in these last five years the people of Syria have endured so many horrors – the barrel bombs, starvation and torture inflicted by the Assad regime, the unspeakable atrocities committed by Daesh and others involved in the fighting.

Now, peace alone will give the Syrian people their future back but in the meantime the question that we faced today was could the world come together and make a real and lasting difference to the lives of the millions of people affected by this crisis?

Could this be a turning point and a day of hope for those people affected by the Syrian conflict?

And in the end it all comes down to choices.

And I believe that today we've made the right choices.

Because countries, donors and businesses have all stepped up, you've all come forward, and we have raised new funds for this crisis to the amount of over $10billion dollars.

As the Secretary General said, together we have committed the largest ever amount in response to a humanitarian crisis, in a single day.

That is a phenomenal, record-breaking total but it also fully reflects the enormity of the crisis that we're all facing and the scale of the suffering.

It also represents a promise, a promise not just to the Syrian people but to those countries that we've heard from today who are supporting them, countries like Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Iraq and Egypt who have shouldered so much of the responsibility.

But we've gone beyond simply funding. Because today was more than that, it was more than about getting funding for UN agencies and NGOs to provide day to day life-saving support, as vital as that is.

We also made a choice on behalf of Syria's children and children in host communities as well. Today the world has been unequivocal: that there should be no lost generation of children affected by the Syrian conflict.

And we have pledged to deliver education to children inside Syria and outside Syria. We've pledged to make sure that there's access to education for all refugee and host community children by the end of the 2016-17 school year. Now this is a monumental pledge and a crucial one – not just for those children and their hopes for their future. But it's an investment in Syria's future as much as anything that we've done today.

And today we've also made a second critical choice on supporting jobs for refugees and economic growth in the countries hosting them.

And these historic agreements with Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan have the potential not only to open up economic opportunities for refugees - but to create jobs as well for local people, and to leave a legacy of economic growth in the countries that have so generously opened their borders to the vast majority of Syrian refugees.

Finally, and critically, we have all condemned – again – the ongoing atrocities committed by all parties to the conflict. We do not accept them - the barrel-bombing, the sexual violence, the targeting of schools and hospitals. And today with one voice we have rightly called on all parties to the conflict, and those with influence over them, to ensure that International Humanitarian Law is upheld.

Today's been an unprecedented response to an unprecedented crisis. We've offered an alternative vision of hope to the people of Syria and all those affected by this crisis.

And we should take real pride in what we've been able to achieve today.

Now, though, we need to deliver.

Today we've set the ambition. For the sake of Syria and for all of us, we've now got to make that ambition a reality. And we've got to keep our promise to the Syrian people.

If we can, I believe that in the years ahead we can truly look back with pride and with hope on what we've managed to accomplish today.

And I think that in the years to come, we will truly be able to say that we've been part of a historic and incredible day.

Thank you.

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