Foreign Minister Gabriel on World Refugee Day

2017-06-20

On the occasion of World Refugee Day, Foreign Minister Gabriel issued the following statement today (20 June):

“Violent conflicts, persecution and massive human rights violations are forcing more and more people around the world to flee their homes. They are often prevented from returning for many years without risking life and limb. This means they depend on reliable protection by the international community. Many require humanitarian aid to provide for themselves and their families, and to live a dignified and secure life. Gaining humanitarian access to those affected is a central challenge for aid organisations.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (

UNHCR

) is one of our most important partners for humanitarian assistance. Together, we work to help refugees who are in distress. We take this task very seriously. Last year, the Federal Foreign Office made available some 307 million euros to the

UNHCR

– a record amount.

Our efforts mainly focus on ensuring that refugees get the protection they require, for example in Syria and in the neighbouring countries that are affected by the crisis. Several million people have been living there as refugees and internally displaced persons for more than six years. It was therefore right and proper that we increased our support for

UNHCR

efforts to help people affected by the crisis in Syria by 48 million euros, to a total of 148 million euros.

This is also about opening up long-term prospects for refugees, so that they can shape their own futures. For this purpose, we have together with the German Academic Exchange Service set up a scholarship fund for Syrian students in Germany. That is also why, for many

years, we have been supporting refugees through the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative of the

UNHCR

, by enabling them to pursue university-level studies in their countries of asylum.

One thing remains clear: Germany cannot successfully tackle these challenges by itself. We need collaborative international efforts and a more just division of responsibilities, so that the suffering of refugees around the world can be reduced, and to prevent drawn-out refugee crises from even occurring.”

Background information:

The mission of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (

UNHCR

) is to protect and assist the world’s more than 65 million refugees, internally displaced persons, asylum seekers, stateless persons and returnees. The

UNHCR

is the guardian of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, the most important international document on the protection of refugees.

Over the past five years, the Federal Government has increased its budget for humanitarian assistance abroad to ten times the former amount. This makes Germany one of the largest donors of humanitarian aid. In 2016, Federal Foreign Office spending for this purpose amounted to approximately 1.3 billion euros. At the same time, Germany is working internationally to promote innovations in, and the strengthening of, the humanitarian system. In a parallel effort, the Federal Foreign Office has joined forces with people and partners involved in Germany’s cultural relations and education policy to significantly increase cultural work in crisis-hit regions. In 2017 alone, a total of 25.3 million euros are being provided to support such work with and for refugees.

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