Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

PM speech at Leaders Summit on Refugees: 20 September 2016

2016-09-20

Introduction

I would like to add my voice to the other speakers who have thanked you, President Obama, for putting refugees at the heart of your final General Assembly as president.

This is an urgent matter. More people are displaced than at any point in modern history. And it is a global matter, with conflict and displaced people on every continent. It's a matter for which we all have a responsibility, both to provide life-saving assistance and enable people to return home one day. And we need to do more, and more effectively.

So today I want to set out how I believe we need to step up our efforts, announcing more UK support and more from other countries.

Financial assistance

First, we need to increase our financial assistance for refugees. Less than half of this year's UN Global Appeal has been met. Just $8 billion of the $21 billion required. As the world's second largest bilateral humanitarian donor, the UK has played a leading role in helping to meet this huge need.

And today, I'm announcing that we will continue to show this leadership, providing almost $2 billion in humanitarian support this year, an increase of more than 10% on last year.

Humanitarian response

Second, with an increasing number of protracted crises and millions now displaced for years, we need a more enduring response.

We must ensure refugees can live with dignity and self-sufficiency, as close as possible to their home countries, to deter them from making dangerous onward journeys, and to enable them eventually to return home and rebuild.

That means helping host countries to provide education and employment opportunities. One example is the Education Cannot Wait fund, to which the UK has pledged $39 million, which will provide quality education to 13 million children in conflict countries over the next 5 years.

And building on the approach of the London Syria conference, I am pleased to join the government of Ethiopia, the World Bank, the EIB, and the EU in announcing a new jobs compact, to which the UK is contributing $104 million.

As the president of Ethiopia said, as part of this, the government of Ethiopia will now allow refugees to work outside of camps, benefitting from some of the 100,000 jobs that will be created.

It is a model for how we can support host countries create jobs for their own people and refugees - a mutually beneficial solution and one we must replicate.

Resettlement

Finally, we need to ensure that the most vulnerable refugees are supported and, if necessary, resettled where their needs can best be met. The UK has committed to resettling 20,000 of the most vulnerable people, including children affected by the Syria crisis.

And in order to support new countries seeking to create resettlement programmes, I'm announcing an initial $3.25million contribution to the UN and IOM emerging countries resettlement fund. And I encourage other countries to support this scheme.

As President Obama said this year on World Refugee Day, the need for the world to respond to this unimaginable suffering is beyond question, so we must continue our efforts to end the conflicts, persecution, and human rights abuses that are at its root.

And we must provide not only more support, but also be more joined up, efficient and effective at delivering this to refugees and host communities. There are millions relying on us to do so.

Syria

On behalf of the London Syria conference co-hosts Germany, Kuwait, Norway, the UK, and the UN, I want to restate our commitment to ending the crisis in Syria. The situation in Syria is deeply troubling.

The 5-year-old political and humanitarian disaster affects everybody's interests: Syrians, Syria's neighbours, the region, and Europe. We clearly recognise the need to end the civil war.

We've supported sustained US efforts to reach an agreement that restores a cessation of hostilities and allows unrestricted humanitarian access in Syria.

Events in the last few days, especially the outrageous attack on a humanitarian convoy in Aleppo, are a reminder of what is at stake.

There can be no military solution to the conflict in Syria, so we must all put our weight behind efforts in New York to agree a ceasefire and reopen space UN-led negotiations, leading to real political transition away from Assad to a new, inclusive government that governs for all Syrians.

Only that transition can finally put an end to the horrific slaughter, siege and starvation of the last 5 years, which has brought untold misery and suffering to the Syrian people.

And while we continue to work toward this aim, the provision of humanitarian aid remains vital. The regime in Damascus must now deliver on its obligations to allow aid unrestricted into Syria, and I call on Russia to use all its influence to ensure this happens.

At the conference in February we raised over $12 billion dollars for Syria and the region - the largest amount ever pledged to a single humanitarian crisis in one day.

We signed ambitious statements with refugee hosting countries to help them expand job and education opportunities and to cope with the impact on local services.

And we agreed on the need to accelerate stabilisation planning. We've made some good progress. Out of $6 billion pledged for this year, the international community has delivered $4.7 billion, much of which has provided life-saving aid to those in desperate conditions inside Syria.

Lebanon has developed a plan to get all children into education. And in Turkey, more than 300,000 Syrian refugee children are now in school. And we strongly support the new measures in Jordan to give Syrians the right to work.

But there is much more to do to meet our commitments, especially as the conflict drags on. First, we must honour our financial pledges. While progress has been good, the scale of need is still higher and we must find even more funding.

Second, we must back up Lebanon's, Jordan's, and Turkey's plans for quality education for all refugee and host-community children by releasing the money they need to deliver.

And third, we must help create the jobs needed for Syrian refugees and host-communities alike by accelerating progress on concessional finance and mobilising the private sector.

The Syria conference was a significant step forward in meeting the huge needs of those affected by the conflict, and there will be detailed discussions tomorrow on practical steps to accelerate progress on our commitments.

It is vital that donors, host countries, UN agencies, NGOs, business and civil society continue to work together to fully address and ultimately end this misery and suffering.

Source: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-speech-at-leaders-summit-on-refugees-20-september-2016