

Berlin Conference on the Syrian Refugee Situation

Supporting Stability in the Region

28 October 2014, Auswärtiges Amt, Berlin

Solidarity with Refugees and their Hosts

Distressed by the terrible suffering of the people in Syria, which has forced almost half of the population to leave their homes, with over three million refugees having fled across the border, the majority being women and children.

Commending the generous hospitality of Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Iraq and Egypt, who are hosting large numbers of refugees from Syria in spite of their limited capacities and resources, and mindful of the costs, pressures and social challenges incurred by these countries' populations as a consequence; Recognizing in this context that Lebanon and Jordan have to date the highest per capita ratio of refugees worldwide; Participants noted that some host countries are not State Parties to the 1951 Geneva Convention on Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, and that they are implementing some of their provisions on a voluntary basis.

Recognizing that the root cause of the displacement, the conflict in Syria, persists; Recognizing also that the deteriorating humanitarian situation inside Syria is further contributing to the movement of refugees, and that improving the support to persons affected by the conflict and in need of humanitarian support inside Syria, and substantially increasing resettlement efforts, may contribute to reducing the pressure on host countries;

Alarmed by the protracted nature of the crisis and the continued pressures on host countries for years to come, and therefore recognizing the need to adopt medium and long-term oriented solutions, to alleviate the impact of this crisis on local communities and host countries, quantitatively and qualitatively;

Mindful that the large majority of refugees are hosted by local communities, and that government services, resources, and infrastructure, particularly social services, health care systems, education systems, housing capacities, water and sanitation facilities and energy are overstretched by the mass influx;

Recognizing that these public services have to be supported so as to manage the temporary surge in population numbers in host communities, adding to the intrinsic development requirements of host countries;

Recognizing the rising refugee and host community tensions, and the urgent necessity to prevent social tensions arising from the refugee crisis, and stressing that appropriate support to host countries and host communities is vital to counter radicalization;

Noting with concern that the international response to the crisis continues to fall short of meeting the needs as assessed by host governments and the United Nations Organisations, and mindful of the need to provide increased funding and better funding predictability;

Recognizing therefore that prioritization and efficiency gains at every level are of utmost priority, requiring ever closer coordination between Donors and Host countries supported by the UN; Welcoming the coordination efforts led by host countries with support of the UN, and commending the establishment of national response plans as the basis of the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) in a broad regional partnership strategy;

The Participants to this conference convene on the following:

Promoting peace and stability in Syria

Participants recognize that a comprehensive and permanent end to suffering in Syria can only be reached through a political solution that ends the bloodshed, and preserves the national unity and the territorial integrity of Syria. They recall in this context that the Geneva Communiqué of 30 June 2012 was endorsed by UN Security Council Resolution 2118, as the basis for an inclusive and Syrian-led political process that meets the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people, and that promotes and protects the human rights of every Syrian regardless of their religion or belief. They welcomed the recent appointment of the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, and pledged to support his work.

Donors will strive to urgently and substantially increase their funding for relief inside Syria, based on identified needs and the ability to deliver aid according to the relevant provisions of International Humanitarian Law and the United Nations' principles of humanitarian action. Donors will consider ways to increase the use of development assistance inside Syria to build the resilience of communities and individuals to withstand the conflict, and where possible begin to rebuild, thereby creating livelihoods inside Syria.

Participants will strive to facilitate and increase their support to all people in need in Syria, particularly in hard-to-reach areas, including through cross-line and cross-border assistance into Syria, in order to ensure adequate provision of aid and services to persons affected by the conflict and in need of humanitarian support inside Syria in accordance with UNSC resolutions 2139 and 2165.

Adjusting the humanitarian and development responses

Donors will strive to mobilize for years to come increased development support to host governments and host communities based on identified needs in line with host countries priorities. Donors will also strive to make their support more predictable for the medium and longer-term, including through increased use of multi-year funding. Donors will explore channeling aid through Trust Funds in coordination with host governments where necessary to provide multi-year funding.

To ensure comprehensive and coherent humanitarian and development responses, donors, International Organisations, the UN and host countries will overcome institutional barriers to work together, to reduce transaction costs and duplication. All participants will continue to coordinate closely under host country lead supported by the UN.

Host countries will highlight the impact of the refugee situation on national response plans; the UN-system and donors will take into account the long-term consequences of the massive refugee influx in their development engagement and consider increasing assistance to host countries. Donors will strive to provide adequate funding and ensure better predictability of their funding, including through multi-year humanitarian and development pledges.

Participants will give particular attention to non-camp and urban refugees and local communities and adapt their humanitarian and development responses to their specific requirements.

Addressing the economic and structural impact on Host Countries

Participants will strive to meet the needs of host communities; donors will align their development support to the objectives and priorities outlined in the national and regional response plans (e.g. WASH / Education / Health care / Sustainable livelihoods and Employment generation), and take into account the environmental impact of the population increase.

Recognizing the adverse impact of the massive refugee influx and continued presence of large numbers of refugees on the national economies and infrastructure of host countries, participants will explore measures to support host countries through economic incentives and explore private sector contributions. These may include income generating activities for host communities in a manner that benefits the local economy and ultimately refugees.

Promoting human rights – Supporting women, children, elderly persons and people with disabilities

Host countries will continue promoting and protecting human rights of all people on their territory and donors will assist them in their efforts.

Participants acknowledge the negative repercussions of the lack of Syrian documentation on refugees from Syria. UN and host countries will work together to address this issue in order to avoid statelessness.

Participants acknowledge that women, children, elderly persons and people with disabilities have unique vulnerabilities. They will continue to protect the rights of women and children, with particular emphasis on protection against violence, including sexual and gender-based violence, and all other forms of exploitation.

Donors will continue to support specific programs, in consultation and with the consent of host countries, to protect these vulnerable individuals and ensure specific needs and capabilities of women and girls are mainstreamed into existing programs. Participants will support the role and voice of women displaced by armed conflict in accordance with Security Council Resolution 1325.

Securing the rights to education and health

Participants recognize the huge burden on host countries' national education and health systems stemming from the mass refugee influx. Host countries will, with the support of donors, strive to provide basic health services, water and sanitation, and opportunities for education to refugees according to national capabilities. Donors will support higher education for refugees according to existing laws and regulations.

Participants welcome the "No Lost Generation Initiative"; they will promote quality education for all children and youth while minimizing negative impact of the refugee crisis on national education institutions and standards. Participants commit to continue to support the "No Lost Generation Initiative", including support to innovative systematic responses, such as certification of students completing their studies in accordance with national laws and regulations.

Increasing opportunities for repatriation, resettlement and humanitarian admission

Participants encourage countries to enact temporary protection status as a flagship initiative signaling solidarity with host countries. Participants noted that any form of integration of refugees from Syria remains a sovereign decision of host and receiving countries.

Participants note that a comprehensive political solution to the conflict in Syria would create an ideal condition for repatriation, while recognizing that conditions for return in safety may precede such a solution. Participants will strive to support efforts leading towards the durable solution of repatriation, abiding by the principle of non-refoulement.

Participants will work towards the UNHCR resettlement pledging conference on 9 December 2014 and strive to offer quantitative commitments for resettlement or other forms of admission for refugees from Syria in 2015 and beyond.

Considering the security implications

Participants recognize the security related implications resulting from the mass refugee influx from Syria and threats to regional stability of the underlying crisis in Syria which put both refugees and local communities at risk. They will support host countries' measures to ensure the safety and security of host communities and refugees.

Donors will support host countries in addressing legitimate security concerns, including through effective border management and internal security measures.

Participants will promote a culture of tolerance and will combat all forms of extremism, xenophobia, and radicalism that could threaten peace and stability.

Participants will work together to combat all forms of organized crime, in particular human trafficking and human smuggling and other forms of exploitation of the despair of refugees, such as forced and exploitive labor.

This document is not legally binding and does not prejudice the international legal obligations of participants.