

## “Humanitarian Approach Towards Refugees and Migrants” Antalya Diplomacy Forum 2021

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Madame Chair, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Friends and Colleagues,

- It is a pleasure and special honour for me to join you and this distinguished panel on behalf of the International Centre for Migration Policy Development. It is my second time at the Antalya Diplomacy Forum and I am very happy that this year it was possible to travel to Turkey and to meet in person in the beautiful town of Antalya. Let us take this as a sign for how much the international community can achieve when it comes together as one and works on joint solutions. What is possible in the fight against the global COVID-19 pandemic should also be possible when it comes to finding solutions for another major challenge of our times, displacement and forced migration.
- It is an often repeated quote that **we live in an age of migration**. Conflict, instability, economic imbalances, globalization, demographic developments and the increasing effects of climate change result in growing levels of mobility, both voluntary and forced, both legal and irregular. And we have to assume that these drivers will become even more important in the future and lead to ever growing potentials for migration.
- Of course, solutions have to be found to **govern the current situation**. But if we do not act together in finding **responses that are better than the ones we have today**, even more challenging decades could be ahead of us. When I refer to “we”, I mean all actors of the international migration system, starting with the countries of origin, transit and destination, but also the international organizations, the private sector, the civil society and most importantly, the migrants and refugees themselves.
- And when I speak about “better responses”, I am convinced that we have to base them on two **principle considerations**. First and foremost, we must emphasize our joint commitment and our joint responsibility to **provide protection to those in need**. However, we must also commit to the **prevention of irregular migration**, to a **better governance of legal migration** and to the **safe and dignified return and reintegration** of migrants, who do not have the right to stay. Both commitments are fundamental to make our systems work and to keep international cooperation alive.
- With this opportunity, I would like to **thank and express our appreciation to Turkey and other refuges hosting countries** for their enormous efforts to provide protection

to those in need, as well as to all other partners, donor countries and the EU for their practical, political and financial support in this regard.

- We all know that international migrants form only a small share of the world population, but we also know that this share is growing. Among them, there are 34 million refugees and asylum seekers and there are more than 45 million people, who have been internally displaced. We all agree that these people deserve our utmost attention and support and that it is our obligation to do our best to help them and to help their host countries. Currently, however, **only three percent of the global refugee population** have access to the so-called **durable solutions** of **repatriation, resettlement** and **local integration**. This basic fact should set the frame for all our action. It should inform us **where** we have to improve and **how much** we have to improve in the coming years.
- **The first priority is of course to think about refugees themselves.** Most of them stay in the neighbourhood of their home countries, many of them for long time periods. It is of utmost importance that they have access to local integration and can participate in the economic, social and cultural life of their host countries.
- Important refugee hosting countries, such as Turkey, Jordan or Lebanon have shown that it is indeed possible to create jobs for large numbers of refugees and migrants, which in turn benefits the economies of these countries themselves. On this, however, we need to be realistic. Currently, not all refugee hosting countries can promote socio-economic integration due to existing economic, social and political limitations. Therefore, the international community has to provide more support but also the private sector needs to be engaged much more in this issue.
- I think that a truly **“humanitarian approach”** towards refugees and migrants is to **end their dependency on humanitarian aid**. If we really want to support them, we need to offer normal living conditions and a stable future both in their host countries and their home countries as soon as the security situation allows for a return.
- **The second priority is to step up the support for the countries who are directly affected by large inflows of refugees and migrants or who have to deal with protracted refugee situations over long time periods.** The international community must do more in order to mitigate the political, economic, social and security-related challenges that these countries are facing.
- Here, a more regional focus is needed that governs migration based on regional dynamics and that applies measures simultaneously in countries of origin, transit and destination. In this context, we should also discuss resettlement as the second durable solution for refugees. It is obvious that it is a difficult political issue for all governments

that want to accept more resettled refugees. But we still have to call for enhancing the related programmes. It is a question of solidarity towards refugees and the countries hosting the largest numbers of displaced and it is a question of commitment of the whole international community towards a joint challenge and a joint responsibility.

- **The third priority is to think about the necessary conditions for promoting return as the third of the sustainable solutions.** In the interest of migrants and refugees we should not accept that they do not have an option to return to their home countries in a voluntary, safe and sustainable way. We, the international community, should do much more to prepare the conditions that this becomes a real option.
- Here, many of the necessary measures are **outside the scope of migration policy as such.** We have to invest more in conflict resolution and peace-building. We have to promote good governance and the rule of law. We have to support the institutional and economic reconstruction of States once a conflict comes to an end. We have to broaden economic development and we must become more creative on trade and investment to tackle the root causes of forced and irregular migration. All of this has to be part of a functioning international cooperation framework on migration and refugees; all of this is needed to prepare, inch by inch, the conditions for voluntary return.
- Ladies and Gentlemen, Turkey hosts four million refugees, the largest number in the world. It has shown tremendous efforts to protect and to integrate these refugees. Many other countries and regions face similar situations and shoulder similar burdens. We can address these challenges only when we come together as one. By listening, by understanding and by helping each other. We need to care about our neighbours, friends and partners. We need to involve a broad array of stakeholders, starting with national authorities, the international community, the private sector and civil society organizations. But most of all, we need to involve refugees and migrants themselves. It is our joint duty to work on better solutions, not mainly for us but mainly for them. Here we always have to bear in mind that we cannot help migrants and the refugees, without directly working with them as well.
- Thank you.