



## **Remarks by Commissioner Avramopoulos at the UNCHR high-level meeting on global responsibility sharing for Syrian refugees**

Geneva, 30 March 2016

Dear Secretary General,

Dear High Commissioner,

Dear Ministers,

Dear Sir, Madam,

The situation in Syria is still unstable and Syrian refugees have no other choice than to flee war and terror. As we all know, managing flows of refugees is a global responsibility and that is why we are here today.

In this context, I would first like to commend the neighbouring countries that spoke earlier for hosting millions of Syrian refugees, and for continuing to do so relentlessly. Let me reiterate our commitment to support these countries – especially Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon – to provide protection and assistance to refugees.

Europe is also ready to take its fair share. We have come a long way from where we were only a year ago. While several European countries have been resettling refugees directly for years, in July 2015, the 28 Member States together with Norway, Switzerland, Iceland, and Liechtenstein, have set up the first ever EU resettlement scheme for 22.504 people in need of international protection. It has led to a first time-engagement of 10 new resettling countries within the EU. Until mid-March, 4,555 people from Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey were resettled in this framework to 11 States. All people resettled were screened and referred by the UNHCR, which is an indispensable actor and partner in the process.

2015 has been an unprecedented year with more than 800 000 arrivals to the European Union. And we should not forget those who lost their lives on their way to Europe.

On 17-18 March, Europe and Turkey reached an agreement to better manage the migratory flows. Its overall objective is to break the pattern of smugglers exploiting refugees and migrants and risking their lives. But if we want to effectively close the backdoor to irregular and dangerous migration routes, we have to open a safe and legal window.

That is why Europe will step up its efforts to open legal ways for Syrian refugees to come to Europe from Turkey, directly and safely. In term of pledges, approximately 18 000 places remain available in the context of the EU resettlement scheme. On top of that, the Commission has proposed last week an amendment to the intra EU relocation scheme for migrants in clear need of international protection from Italy and Greece. As we expect the flows from Turkey to decrease, propose that Member States use the 54 000 places not yet attributed under the relocation scheme to legally and directly admit Syrian refugees from Turkey. This represents a significant increase of our pledge for resettlement/humanitarian admission. Beyond these emergency measures, we recognise that a credible and sustained resettlement/humanitarian admission effort, targeting Syrians in Turkey, is needed. That is why the EU continues to work on the establishment of a Voluntary Humanitarian Admission Scheme with Turkey.

As regards the process, the Commission, together with the Member States and thanks to the support of the UNHCR, is exploring ways of accelerating the resettlement procedure. In the meantime, we are confronted with considerable differences between national resettlement programmes and practices. The lack of reception capacities as well as delays caused by exit clearances imposed on the resettlement candidates in countries outside Europe, is also often source of delay. To address these challenges, the Commission is facilitating the exchanges of practices and operational cooperation for activities such as:

- field selection missions,
- pre-departure programmes,
- transfer of refugees,
- arrival procedures,
- and reception arrangements.

Our objective is to set up a stronger and more coordinated resettlement system at EU level.

It would allow upscaling our resettlement efforts through common rules and procedures for participating States. We should not be reinventing the wheel, so we should learn from and exchange best practices. Bust most importantly, we need to step up delivery and foster political will.

This needs to get done at a global scale. The migration and refugee crisis is a global challenge, and requires a global response. Today's high-level meeting is essential for this, and I look forward to continuing our conversation at the New York Summit in September on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants.

Thank you for your attention.

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