

Edited version of delivered remarks

High Commissioner's Closing Remarks to the High Level Segment on Solidarity and Burden Sharing with Countries Hosting Syrian Refugees

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Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to express my very deep gratitude for the commitment, dedication and the extremely positive spirit with which all delegations have participated in this High Level Segment. This was an impressive show of solidarity of the international community, and I hope that this will be a contribution to what we all want – the end of the conflict in Syria, peace and a political solution. But to achieve this is like putting together the pieces of a puzzle, and until very recently, the pieces of this puzzle were nowhere to be seen.

I truly believe that this High Level Segment has proven itself to be one piece for the puzzle. The international community was able to come together and to approve a unified position of support to the refugee hosting countries, recognizing the principle of solidarity and burden-sharing as a fundamental tool for the international protection regime. We are asking these governments to go on keeping borders open and granting protection to Syrian refugees, as we ask all other governments in the world to do the same. But we have assumed the commitment to do everything we can in order to be able to support them in this very generous but also very challenging commitment that they have taken on.

Slowly, other pieces of the puzzle are emerging. Last week, the Security Council approved a resolution ending the possibility of the use of chemical weapons in Syria, and this week, it is discussing humanitarian access and other forms of improving the humanitarian situation in the region. Slowly, piece by piece, we are starting to have some hope.

This meeting was also very important because we fully recognized that we are no longer only in a humanitarian crisis. While we do remain in a protracted humanitarian emergency, both

inside Syria and for the refugees that leave the country, the problem is now bigger than that. The crisis has become a structural problem for the economies and the societies of the host countries, and a threat not only to regional peace and stability, but to global peace.

That is why it is important that from now on, the work of humanitarian agencies and the work of development agencies is joined together, and that mechanisms of coordination are established effectively. This is essential for agencies to be able to fully cooperate with the Governments of the host countries, implementing programs and projects that address not only the needs of the refugee community but also those of the host communities, and that allow the structural problems of these countries to meet with a coherent and longer-term response.

Today in Jordan, we already have such a mechanism in place, coordinated by the Minister of Planning and International Cooperation with a number of other ministries, and with UNDP and UNHCR as the secretariat. The World Bank is also active in Jordan, with two program assessments already done and a comprehensive assessment which will be launched soon.

In Lebanon, the World Bank, together with the UN system, already completed a comprehensive assessment of the impact of the crisis on the Lebanese economy and society. We hope that the Lebanese government will now be able to come together and create the structures needed to coordinate the humanitarian and development agencies so they can fully support the country facing the most challenging of the consequences of the Syria crisis.

The Kurdistan regional authorities, in cooperation with the Iraqi national government, are also putting in place the mechanisms to fully respond to this crisis. Humanitarian and development agencies including the World Bank will work together, and in coordination with the KRG and national governments, to establish a similar program. The governments of Turkey and Egypt are also developing a number of initiatives that can be directly supported by the international community.

I believe that this meeting sent a clear signal that the problem is fully understood and that we all recognize that both sides need to be addressed – the humanitarian needs of the Syrian people, and the challenging structural problems facing host countries that support Syrian refugees.

At the same time, it is not only financial, economic and technical support to these states which is needed – it is also effective burden-sharing in receiving refugees, which means keeping all borders open for Syrians seeking protection in other parts of the world. It also includes receiving through resettlement, humanitarian admission, family reunification or similar mechanisms, refugees who are today in the neighboring countries but who can find a solution outside the region.

I was extremely encouraged by the fact that during this meeting, 17 countries have announced special quotas either for resettlement, humanitarian admission or family reunification of Syrian refugees from the region. This clearly demonstrates that the international community now feels that we have a shared responsibility. These countries have

been hosting Syrian refugees on behalf of us all, of all countries in the world. It is high time for all of us, all countries of the world and all international organizations, to be fully side by side with them, sharing this burden but also creating the conditions for the international protection regime not to be challenged but strengthened by the Syrian refugee crisis.

Thank you very much.