

World Humanitarian Summit

Member States and other Stakeholders Announcement Plenary

Statement by

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Mdme. Chair,

Austria fully aligns herself with the statement made by the European Union.

We would like to thank the Secretary General for his initiative to convene the first-ever World Humanitarian Summit. We would also like to express our deep appreciation to the Government and the people of Turkey for hosting this meeting and their generous hospitality.

The Summit comes at a very opportune time. Human suffering, in particular due to armed conflicts has reached unprecedented levels. Major crises have put an enormous strain on the humanitarian system; the needs are outstripping our ability to respond.

Austria has been directly and substantially affected by the massive increase of refugees and migrants heading to Europe both as a transit and host country: since the beginning of 2015 more than 110.000 persons have decided to stay in Austria and apply for asylum.

We very much welcome the Agenda for Humanity by the Secretary General which offers a broad range of recommendations which should help to confront together the challenge of our time: to prevent and alleviate human suffering, to protect life and to respect the dignity of the human being. These are core values which are common to all religions, cultures and regions.

Reducing human suffering means first of all to address much more vigorously the massive violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law by States and non-State armed actors. The protection of people in need has to be at the core of humanitarian action, taking into account the vulnerability of women, children and other specific groups.

Austria is making a number of pledges supporting the Core Commitments with regard to promote the respect for international humanitarian law and the protection of civilians. Our pledges address the strengthening of compliance, the protection of civilians in the conduct of hostilities, in particular with regard to minimize the harm inflicted on civilians by the use of explosive weapons, the unimpeded humanitarian access, the protection of journalists and health care workers. Explosive weapons in populated areas have been identified by the Secretary-General as the “primary killer of civilians in conflict”: Austria commits to reduce the negative impact of those weapons on civilians by taking effective measures such as a working towards an international political declaration on this issue.

Further pledges by Austria relate to gender equality, including the eradication of sexual and gender based violence, as well as the inclusion of persons with disabilities.

Given the importance of local ownership and leadership we commit also to strengthen the capacity of front line responders, including local civil society organizations. We are also addressing the increasing importance of disaster risk reduction with a number of pledges.

There is a strong case for an increased support for countries and local communities hosting large numbers of refugees. These countries – as well as countries of origin - should benefit from a better access to grants and concessional funding by international development institutions, in particular the World Bank. Austria will support such initiatives and also provide additional funds for the International Development Agency of the World Bank in order to support such countries

We very much hope that the WHS will reaffirm and broaden the consensus for principled humanitarian action and provide momentum for the necessary adaptation of the humanitarian system to the enormous challenges.