

Speech for Commissioner Mimica for Pledging Conference on Somali refugees
(5 minutes)- 21st October 2015

Ministers, High Commissioner, your Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very honoured to speak here today to mobilise international support for Somali refugees and displaced persons.

As an EU citizen, I bear the memory of Europe's history, which is marked by migration, forced displacement and returns. Nearly every European family has at one time been affected by displacement, as President Juncker rightly pointed out during his State of the Union speech.

As a Croatian citizen, I bear witness of the damage that war can do when it rages through a country, ravages its prosperity, divides its people and pushes them away from their homes and livelihoods.

So it is with strong conviction and belief that I co-host today's conference with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, my friend Antonio Guterres.

With more than 9 million refugees and displaced persons in the Horn of Africa, we must rise to the challenge of offering these people a better future.

And with more than 2,1 million Somali refugees and displaced persons, we must give high priority to Somalia.

Let me start with the big picture first. In support to the challenges faced by irregular migrants, forced displaced persons and refugees, the EU has just launched a new initiative in the Horn of Africa. It is based on three pillars of intervention.

Firstly, we will help the countries in the region to increase their capacity to better handle migration flows and displacement. This will include actions aimed at improving the conditions of people that find themselves in a protracted displacement situation or along the migration routes.

Secondly, we will provide a targeted response to the needs for resilience in the region's most fragile areas and for the vulnerable populations.

Thirdly, we will promote socio-economic development and increase work opportunities, especially for young people.

This is an ambitious agenda. It will require serious political investment and engagement on behalf of all partners. It will also require a serious financial mobilisation of everyone. There is a lot that is foreseen in the planned grant money of around 4,3 billion euros that is allocated to the region. Now, the EU has mobilised additional funds, and we have decided to establish an emergency EU Trust Fund. This will enable us to speed up delivery of aid to the countries most affected and to their populations. The Trust Fund will start to work with an initial budget of 1.8 billion euros, which will be increased by additional contributions from EU Member States.

I am looking forward to working together with my colleagues in the region to get this important initiative off the ground.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today we have seen in the film how difficult life can be for refugees after returning home. We have to be able to offer integrated solutions that include adequate accommodation; livelihood; basic social services as well as rule of law and security. This is a tall order in today's Somalia. But if we work together, it is not impossible to achieve.

So I am proud to announce today that the EU is planning to contribute 60 million euros in support to Somali refugees in Somalia and Kenya through two targeted actions. They will be part of the Trust Fund actions, so as to deliver quick results on the ground.

First of all, we are putting in place a 50 million euro programme to support the sustainable and durable reintegration of refugees and internally displaced persons in Somalia. This will help manage voluntary returns from Kenya, Yemen and Europe; it will improve the legal framework for IDPs, refugees, returnees; and it will increase access to basic services and creation of realistic livelihood opportunities. The programme will be fully aligned with the Somali Compact. It does not stand alone, but complements EU support to Somalia with 286 million euro for the period 2014-2020, which focus on State and peace building, food security and resilience, and education.

Secondly, the EU commits today to finance a 10 million euros programme for northern Kenya. We aim to provide relief and better life opportunities to refugees in protracted situations when returns are not yet possible, as well as to their host communities.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to conclude my intervention by repeating the words of a European citizen, former UN High Commissioner for Refugees, and Noble Price Winner, Mr Poul Hartling: 'The possibility of a new life is the only lasting and dignified solution for the refugee himself'.

Let us all work to achieve that.

And now I'm looking forward to hearing the announcements of the other partners.

Thank you.