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In the global response to the refugee crisis, European leaders are lagging behind

As organisations working with or for Syrian refugees, we consider today's Geneva meeting a missed opportunity to commit to resettling Syrian refugees, by failing to pledge to meet the minimal target of providing places for 10% of Syrian refugees.

The UN Secretary General is right to say that the \$11 billion generously pledged at the International Conference on Supporting Syria and the Region in February must now be honoured. The reality is that nearly 5 million Syrian refugees have fled violence in the last 5 years and Europe, in particular, is failing to deal with the crisis on its doorstep. With crackdowns on irregular routes to Europe, including land and sea borders, it is imperative that safe and organized routes are put in place as a matter of urgency, or desperate people will take even greater risks to find safety.

Jane Waterman, Executive Director of the International Rescue Committee in the UK and Senior Vice President Europe said: "We should be under no illusion that the EU-Turkey deal will bring an end to the refugee crisis. The meetings today were an opportunity for European leaders to commit to sharing responsibility for a global crisis by committing to resettlement programmes and expanding alternative pathways to safety. Instead, they remain committed to an illogical and unethical agreement in which places for resettlement hinge on the return of asylum seekers".

Sophie Powell, Christian Aid's Senior Policy and Advocacy Advisor said: "Brazil, Canada and Germany are welcoming many tens of thousands of refugees through resettlement and other organised pathways, demonstrating the principled political leadership that is possible.

"Today we have been deeply disappointed that our call to commit to resettle at least 10% of the most vulnerable refugees living in only 5 host countries, has not been met. The UK's decision to welcome 20,000 refugees over 5 years is far too low given the overwhelming need. The UK government should come to the UN meeting in September with a much greater level of ambition."

Resettlement and other pathways for admission – including broadening family reunion criteria and issuing humanitarian visas as well as labour and study opportunities - are a critical element of the response to the Syria crisis, ensuring predictable, manageable and safe passage for the most vulnerable refugees in dire need of protection. But resettlement of Syrian refugees has been insufficient so far. Only 178,195 pledges for resettlement and other forms of admission

have been made in the past two years, and only a fraction of that number have translated into actual departures for third countries. This is simply not enough.

Canada has confirmed at least 30,000 resettlement places for Syrian refugees. Other countries, particularly the members of the European Union, the US and the Gulf States, can and must show leadership and do more. Financial pledges have been made, and resettlement places committed to, but now is the time to take the initiative and turn these pledges into reality for the sake of thousands of the most vulnerable people.

Resettlement is a necessary complement to increased humanitarian aid and redoubled diplomatic efforts to secure a lasting peace in Syria. But until the conflict ends it is the responsibility of global leaders to ensure that its victims can live in safety.

International Rescue Committee UK
Christian Aid
British Refugee Council
ActionAid UK

ENDS.

Notes to editors

Ahead of the March 30th Meeting in Geneva a coalition of NGOs wrote an [open letter](#) to global leaders urging them to pledge to achieve the UNHCR target of resettlement and alternative pathways for at least 10 percent of Syria's nearly five million refugees.

[CLICK HERE](#) TO DOWNLOAD THE REPORT ON INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE'S RESETTLEMENT PROPOSAL FOR EUROPE.

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