Pledging conference raises Euro 94 million to help Somali refugees return home

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Representatives from more than 40 countries and organizations have pledged Euro 94 million (or USD 105 million) to support Somali refugees in Kenya and help them to voluntarily return to Somalia in safety and dignity. At today’s pledging conference hosted by the European Commission and UNHCR, the international community committed resources to a plan of action designed to improve socio-economic conditions in Somalia and support refugees preparing for return from the Dadaab camps in Kenya. In addition, a pledge was made to provide training and job opportunities in Somalia for 10,000 returnees.

The EU committed €60 million to support the creation of sustainable solutions for Somali refugees in Somalia and in the region. €50 million of that will support the reintegration of refugees and internally displaced persons in Somalia, for example by increasing access to basic services, enhancing livelihoods and reducing vulnerability in areas of return and departure. A €10 million programme for northern Kenya will provide relief and better opportunities for Somalian refugees who find themselves in particularly vulnerable situations when returns are not yet possible.

While recognizing that conditions in Somalia are not yet conducive for large-scale returns, participants committed to support those refugees who have already chosen to return to make their reintegration back home more secure and sustainable. The two-year plan will focus on improving security and law enforcement, rehabilitation of infrastructure and environment, expansion of access to education, water and sanitation services, health care provision, shelter, agriculture and the creation of job opportunities. The plan of action requires a total amount of USD 500 million (or € 445.5 million) and is aligned with the Somalia New Deal Compact framework. At the same time, there will also be increased support for hosting communities, in particular in Kenya, which has been hosting hundreds of thousands of Somali refugees over the last two decades.

“Somalia needs our help, now more than ever”, High Commissioner Guterres said. “I am deeply grateful for the unwavering support by the international community, for the commitment by the host countries to continue to provide protection to Somali refugees and for the promise by others to step up their contributions to make returns safe and sustainable”.

High Representative and Vice-President, Federica Mogherini stated: “The EU is a strong supporter of the development of a stable and secure Somalia. Today’s Ministerial Conference has shown that we must work together in partnership on the common goal of contributing to the better future of Somali refugees and displaced persons and that Europe and Africa can work together on migration and refugees”.

Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven Mimica, stated: "Today, the European Union has confirmed its commitment to support Somali refugees and displaced persons, both in Somalia and in neighbouring countries. This commitment, including a new €60 million package on top of the already existing significant development assistance, is an important contribution to promote peace and stability and address the root causes of migration and displacement."

“Too many of our citizens have been in exile for too long, said Somali Prime Minister Omar Abdirashid Ali Sharmake at the conference. “After 25 years of feeling unable to come home, the positive changes in the country have given them hope. They want to return and help rebuild Somalia into a prosperous and successful nation. We are grateful for the support of the international community to help us achieve this”.
The leader of the Kenya delegation Maj. Gen (Rtd) Joseph Nkaissery, Cabinet Secretary for Interior and Coordination of National Government, emphasized the need for the International Community to support Kenya in all ways to address this problem which it has shouldered for over 25 years. He underlined that countries across the world, who have generously hosted Somali refugees, were watching to see how the International Community would support the repatriation from Kenya.

More than 5,300 refugees have now returned to Somalia since December 2014, assisted by UNHCR and partners while a significant number of Somalis have returned spontaneously. Over 2 million Somalis remain displaced in the region, including some 1.1 million in their own country and 967,000 as refugees in the neighbouring countries. The majority (420,000) are living in Kenya, mostly in the five refugee camps in Dadaab in the north-east of the country. Nearly 250,000 Somali refugees live in Ethiopia, an estimated 240,000 in Yemen, while over 29,000 are in Uganda and nearly 12,000 in Djibouti.

For more information, photos and video (and B-roll) please see the UNHCR media page:

http://www.unhcr.org/somalia-ministerial/

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