

Statement on the occasion of World Refugee Day, 20 June 2018

Resettling refugees, promoting solidarity, embodying Europe's values

On the occasion of the World Refugee Day, 20 June, and in the context of the current negotiations on the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), Caritas Europa calls on European governments to increase safe and legal pathways for refugees by expanding national resettlement programmes. We stand for a Europe that provides durable solutions for people in need of protection and shows global responsibility sharing with countries already hosting the majority of refugees worldwide.

"I fled from Eritrea to neighbouring Ethiopia. Then via Sudan, Libya, and Tunisia I came here, to Belgium. My first goal was to save my life and the lives of my wife and children. Back home I received a degree in car mechanics, studied at the university and got a degree in general management. In Belgium I have managed to become a driver for people with disabilities, using this opportunity to start a new life", explains Filmon, an Eritrean refugee resettled in Belgium. "For me, Filmon concludes, resettlement is not just about moving a refugee from one place to another; it's a life-saving operation". (Source: Caritas Belgium)

Today 22.5 million people worldwide have been forced to flee their country. 85% of the world's refugees are hosted by developing countries like Ethiopia, where 740,000 people in need of protection are living. Turkey hosts the largest share of the world's refugees worldwide (2.8 million). 1 out of 6 people is a refugee in Lebanon (1 million refugees). According to the UNHCR, at least 1.2 million people were in need of resettlement in 2017, but only 5% have been effectively resettled (65,100). Like Filmon, they cannot return to their countries because of protracted conflict, wars and persecution, and they also have little options of integrating in the first country of asylum either, due to political instability, poverty and lack of appropriate infrastructures. More safe and legal pathways for people in need of protection are cruelly lacking. This forces many asylum seekers to risk their lives and embark on irregular journeys to access protection.

*"Resettlement can be a very tangible demonstration of a country's commitment to share refugee protection with those countries who shoulder most of this responsibility, and it also offers a durable solution for the re-integration of refugees whose life and basic rights may be in danger in first countries of asylum." says Shannon Pfohman, Caritas Europa's Policy and Advocacy Director. "However, resettlement **must keep its protection function intact** and should not serve political objectives of migration control and deterrence. We also think resettlement should never replace the right to spontaneously apply for asylum in a country."*

Only by increasing resettlement places and providing credible safe and legal pathways to people in need of protection, can we ensure refugees will have the means to successfully rebuild their lives and start anew. In this context, the ongoing negotiation of the Global Compact on Refugees is a golden opportunity to demonstrate States' solidarity with first countries of asylum and contribute to the development of a global system of responsibility sharing that should not be missed.

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Notes to editor:

- Resettlement is the selection and transfer of refugees, mainly under the auspices of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), from a State in which they have sought protection to a third State, which has agreed to admit them – as refugees – with permanent residence status. UNHCR selection criteria are based on vulnerability. Resettlement is one of the three durable solution identified by UNHCR for refugees, alongside voluntary repatriation to the country of origin, and local integration in the country of asylum
- In September, the European Commission [recommended](#) EU Member States to pledge to effectively resettle 50 000 refugees by May 2019. Priorities countries to be resettled from were Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and the countries along the central Mediterranean route (Libya, Niger, Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan). An EU resettlement regulation is also under negotiation as part of the reform of the Common European asylum system.
- On World Refugee Day, Caritas Europa will launch a Europe-wide campaign called **#whatishome**, which asks people to reflect on the meaning of home and on the reasons, for which people move from one place to another. The campaign is part of [MIND](#) – Migration. Interconnectedness. Development – a 3-year project financed by DG DEVCO with 12 European Caritas organisations, including Caritas Europa.
- The [Global Compact on Refugees \(GCR\)](#) is an international agreement being discussed at the United Nations under the guidance of the UNHCR. Negotiations are ongoing, with a final text expected to be submitted for approval at the 2018 UN General Assembly. Under the framework of the GCR, 193 States committed to work towards increasing resettlement programs and other legal pathways for admission of refugees.

Caritas Europa is a network of 49 member organisations in 46 European countries and one of the 7 regions of Caritas Internationalis. Our members assist and provide services to millions of people in need. Caritas Europa aims at lifting people out of poverty by empowering them and by influencing unjust structures and unfair policies that keep people trapped in positions of disempowerment. www.caritas.eu