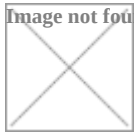


Speech

20 September 2016

MIGRATION LEADERS? MEETING ON REFUGEES

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Dear President,

Dear Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

President Obama's initiative to gather us all here will undoubtedly be part of his contribution to peace and safety in the world.

The images that we see are those of a tragedy. The **figures** speak for themselves:

20 million people in the world are refugees,

40 million displaced people.

During the first eight months of this year, nearly 270,000 people have crossed the Mediterranean. Many are refugees, fleeing the war which is ravaging Syria.

Our meeting today must, on the one hand, highlight the considerable efforts that some of us are making in the refugee crisis. But it must also raise others' awareness that they should do more and better, in a spirit of **responsibility and solidarity**.

Mr. President,

No-one should be forced to leave their country. Above all the **root causes of the migrations** and the flows of refugees must be tackled.

The work must be done in the countries of origin. An end must be put to wars, violence and all discriminations ? whether they are ethnic, religious, ideological, or based on sex or sexual orientation.

The rules of democracy and the rule of law must be respected.

But it is also a question of ensuring economic growth which benefits everyone. Everyone should be given the possibility of thriving, learning, looking after themselves and raising their children peacefully and safely.

Mr. President,

The **efforts made by Belgium** to come to the aid of refugees are part of a long tradition of protection and hospitality.

Belgium's **contribution** to the international community's efforts regarding humanitarian aid to refugees is €160 million in 2016, i.e. more than double the amounts committed in 2015.

Belgium also gives its **aid to bilateral development** to improve living conditions in many countries of origin, particularly in Central Africa and West Africa.

But our most significant efforts are in **welcoming** people that request protection into Belgium.

In 2015, Belgium took in 45,583 people, and has taken in nearly 25,000 more in 2016.

It is here that my government, but also our community that commit on a daily basis to offer the best welcome possible and the best possibilities of integration.

In this regard, a principle which I think is essential for all of us is to **guarantee that the human rights of the refugees are respected**. I am thinking in particular of the children and women who are the most vulnerable.

This requirement is universal, as is the need for those coming into our country to comply with **our laws** and to accept the duties and obligations of our own citizens.

Mr. President

Ladies and Gentlemen

Refugees and illegal migrants or those who emigrate legally share the same objective with the rest of humanity.

They hope that their children will live in peace and safety and have the right to be active citizens.

Let us combine our efforts to enable this hope to become a reality, by tackling the causes of forced displacements of populations.

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