

Your Excellency Ambassador Yahya,

Assistant High Commissioner,

Fellow panellists,

Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,

In the light of ever increasing refugee movements, and based on the realisation that potentially every state could be facing large inflows of refugees, we set out on a path towards joint, more rapid and more comprehensive responses to large refugee situations when we adopted the New York Declaration in September last year. A future direction that aims at easing the pressure on host countries and providing solutions for refugees that would otherwise find themselves in protracted situations, where neither their protection is guaranteed nor basic needs are filled and future perspectives seem out of reach.

That's why we committed ourselves in the New York Declaration to putting those most affected at the centre of planning and action. And we encouraged joint responses involving all relevant actors – including international financial

institutions and civil society – in order to lay a basis for sustainable solutions.

That is why we also particularly appreciate the engagement of the World Bank and its introduction of a “from crisis response to risk management and preparedness” approach - which means developing an effective approach to manage repeated inflows over the medium-term.

However, if we want the World Bank to play a stronger role to deal with this and other global challenges, it needs an appropriate financial basis. Germany therefore supports a capital increase for the World Bank and we call upon others to also support this step.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Germany, lately has been really challenged by the large influx of refugees – despite financial resources at hand, well-established asylum procedures and administrative systems; despite organised, institutionalised volunteerism and the spontaneous offer of assistance from many ordinary citizens.

Our experience with the reception of, and response to, large numbers of refugees has taught us – sometimes painfully – some valuable lessons:

Leadership and a coordinated response are key: Not only did the Chancellor herself show strong leadership in the refugee response, but a dedicated coordination structure was put in place to facilitate a whole-of-government approach.

It was highly relevant that ministries assigned capacities, possibilities and necessary resources to integrate the refugee response in existing policies and programmes.

Stand-by response capacity available within civil society was another crucial factor: our organisations with large networks of volunteers, logistical capacity and certain stocks, such as the German Red Cross or the German fire brigade association could mobilise quickly and in an organised way.

Provision of relevant, comprehensive, accessible information, both for refugees and volunteers, proved to be challenging. Establishing a few pre-determined central points of information that can link to other sources of information and networks would be helpful.

Lastly, given the challenges to mobilize qualified staff within a short period of time in order to scale up the asylum procedure, consideration could be given to establishing a pool of potential asylum

case workers, drawing on the human resources of different administrative authorities, as additional staff would then be already trained and familiar with the asylum procedures when the need for surge capacity arises.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We proposed, in the first thematic discussion on 10th July, the establishment of a “Global Response Group”, which, in fact, would be, in essence, a core group of mobilisers. A core group that has the convening power to bring all relevant actors on board. The Chair of UNHCR ExCom and first vice chair, multilateral humanitarian and development organizations, civil society and refugee organizations as well as representatives of major donors and major refugee hosting and resettlement countries could form this core group.

So what would the task of such a Response Group be? To mobilise – to mobilise political commitment, to mobilise resources, to mobilise early joint assessment and planning between humanitarian, development and other relevant actors to ensure a context-specific whole-of-society approach, and to mobilize opportunities

for legal pathways. And not just to mobilise, but to do so in due time and in a concerted manner.

To, so to say, “activate” the core group, we would need a “bell ringer” who acts according to pre-agreed criteria. UNHCR could play this role.

The members of the group would then support UNHCR in mobilizing the international community to respond to the emerging refugee crisis. To do so, they would also identify a host country for a solidarity conference that kick-starts a comprehensive response to the refugee crisis.

The added value of the approach would in fact be threefold: faster and more coordinated response that involves new partnerships and, thereby, provides funding for emergency and beyond and ensures additionality of resources; larger confidence of host countries that they will not be left alone when receiving refugees on their territory; and attention for the need for durable solutions for refugees right from the beginning of an emerging crisis.

Ladies and gentlemen,

When talking about structures for rapid response we also need to talk about how to enhance the preparedness of response capacities, not only in refugee contexts, but also in the context of

natural disasters and climate change. Therefore, we need to invest in comprehensive disaster risk management activities that include disaster preparedness to address the underlying drivers of large displacement situations.

Already in 2011, Germany launched a special Preparedness Initiative to promote a forward looking, anticipatory approach to humanitarian assistance, which aims at enabling communities at risk to be able to make preparations before disasters happen, also to avoid, or at least reduce, such potential disaster displacement situations.

Since 2011, we have seen a lot of progress and evidence that preparedness measures help to minimize the impact of future crises and disasters, alleviate human suffering, reduce the material damage and, thereby, also reduce the risks of displacement situations. Therefore, we also focus within our humanitarian and development assistance on improving early warning systems, better contingency planning, more risk reduction capacity building for responders; and we support the implementation of local, national and regional disaster simulation exercises – including the simulation of cross border displacement situations.

As soon as a specific forecast threshold is reached, targeted risk reduction and preparedness, such as pre-stocking of emergency items, additional trainings, or cash assistance are financed and implemented in order to reduce the impact of the anticipated risks. We are currently implementing this Forecast-based Financing approach in selected high risk countries and have already been able to take action before the impact of disasters is felt, based on forecasts to strengthen the resilience of potentially affected communities.

There are, indeed, numerous lessons to be learnt for preparedness for, and response to, large refugee movements, including from approaches already successfully implemented in the field of disaster displacement.

We are happy to see that UNHCR has taken up the proposal for a core group of responders. And we would encourage UNHCR to develop concrete terms of reference, criteria for activating the Response Group and a potential composition of the response group.

I thank you for your attention.