

**Speech by the Minister for Foreign Trade and
Development Cooperation, Sigrid Kaag, at the Global
Refugee Forum on 18 December 2019 at the Palais des
Nations in Geneva.**

Ladies and gentlemen,

We're all aware of the terrible plight of over 25 million refugees in the world. We need to offer them prospects for a brighter future.

We admire the generosity of the host countries and local communities who welcome refugees and help them rebuild their lives. And we realize that's not easy. To create better prospects for refugees, as well as vulnerable local communities, we need to offer our support. Through access to decent and sustainable jobs and livelihoods. Through mental health and psychosocial support.

Humanitarian assistance is critical, but that alone is not enough. Given that, on average, a refugee existence lasts for over 17 years, we need sustainable and innovative solutions. Therefore, we all need to share lessons learned and good practices. That's why we're here at the first Global Refugee Forum.

Studies by the World Bank and ILO show that allowing refugees access to the formal local labour market benefits not only refugees but also the local community and economy. It gives people a chance to develop their potential and to contribute positively to society. For refugees, it also means gaining knowledge and experience that will help to rebuild their home country once safe return is possible.

To this end, the Netherlands has launched a new multi-annual, 500 million euro partnership. Appropriately, it is called PROSPECTS.

It brings together UNHCR, UNICEF, ILO, IFC, the World Bank and humanitarian and development actors to create an enabling environment for the socioeconomic inclusion of refugees through joint analysis, data-sharing, programming and advocacy.

This new model supports countries throughout a crisis – from strengthening resilience and preparedness at the onset to creating lasting solutions.

To enhance the resilience of refugees and host communities it's also crucial to make MHPSS an integral part of the response to any protracted crisis. Refugees often suffer trauma as a result of conflict, violence and environmental disaster. Studies have shown that refugees with better access to MHPSS can integrate into the local labour market more easily.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Returning home is the ultimate wish of many refugees. So we must do everything we can to resolve conflicts. This is a key responsibility we all share.

In addition, we need to broaden support for and seize the opportunities offered by the framework of the Global Compact on Refugees.

We all need to step up our efforts: donors, host countries, civil society, the private sector. Everybody. We need to listen and learn. And above all we need to act. Prospects for all start here.

Thank you.