

PODIUM VERSION

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Global Refugee Forum

Statement by the Government of Canada
Delivered by the Honourable Marco E.L. Mendicino
Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada

Geneva, 17-18 December 2019

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Forum Mondial sur les Réfugiés

Déclaration du Gouvernement du Canada
Prononcée par l'honorable Marco E. L. Mendicino
Ministre de l'Immigration, des Réfugiés et de la Citoyenneté

Genève, 17-18 décembre 2019

GLOBAL REFUGEE FORUM

Plenary Session – Debate on Burden and Responsibility-Sharing

Government of Canada: General Statement

Mr Chair, Your Excellencies , distinguished delegates,

We are here in Geneva, where our most cherished humanitarian conventions have been enshrined through common cause, on the occasion of this inaugural Global Refugee Forum.

We convene at a critical moment, where the number of displaced persons worldwide has reached over 70 million.

It is against this backdrop that the UNHCR has brought together the community of nations.

Canada has a long tradition of offering safe harbor to those forced to flee their homes because of war, conflict and persecution.

Our history is replete with examples of compassion, openness and decisive action.

Most recently, in 2015, Canada launched Operation Syrian Refugee, which was an historic endeavor given its size, scale and urgency.

This was a special time, for I had just been elected as a Member of Parliament, and I wish to share with you a personal memory.

I remember when my eight-year old daughter joined me at Toronto Pearson International airport to welcome the first of the arriving refugees. I watched in awe as she was embraced by a Syrian family who had lost everything, and yet had found comfort in a gesture of warmth that symbolized the hope for a second chance and a new life.

Our work at the Global Forum marks an unprecedented opportunity to build a better future for refugees around the world.

Canada's presence here is a reflection of our steadfast commitment to remain engaged and at the forefront of exploring new and innovative solutions.

On that note, we know that it is essential to include refugees in our dialogue so that we might better understand the challenges and the opportunities of resettlement, and that is why I am so proud to have Mustafa Alio, himself a Syrian refugee, officially join our delegation.

Welcome!

I hope we will continue to work together as Canada demonstrates its commitment in myriad ways, including by co-chairing the *Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement*, by refining new complementary pathways for refugees who possesses economic mobility, and by introducing a new dedicated resettlement program for at risk human rights advocates, journalists and humanitarian workers.

Canada will continue to share best practices around community sponsorship in order to enhance capacity around resettlement opportunities and inclusion.

À cet égard, nous sommes heureux de continuer de mettre en œuvre des programmes communautaires de parrainage de réfugiés à l'échelle mondiale, par l'entremise de l'Initiative mondiale de parrainage de réfugiés.

It has been our experience that local communities have a strong desire to roll up their sleeves and contribute.

When given the opportunity to do so, not only does it promote better outcomes for refugees, but communities themselves are transformed and bettered in ways previously unimaginable.

Le Canada maintiendra également son engagement continu à l'égard de l'éducation des femmes et des filles en situation de fragilité, notamment les réfugiées.

Women's and girls' education plays a key role in resolving global challenges, which is why Canada is engaging with the international community to ensure that women and girls have access to quality education.

Monsieur le président/Madame la présidente, le Canada demeure inébranlable dans son appui à ses partenaires humanitaires. Aujourd'hui, je suis heureux d'annoncer le renouvellement de l'appui institutionnel à long terme du Canada au Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés, avec un financement total

de cinquante virgule quatre (50,4) millions de dollars canadiens au cours des quatre prochaines années.

We know that there is still much more work to be done. Canada stands ready. We are here as your friend, your partner and your ally.

In closing, I would like to leave you with the story of Dr Nungh Tran-Davies, who after arriving in Canada as a refugee 40 years ago, decided to honour that experience and sponsor a refugee family from Syria.

When Dr Tran-Davies first arrived, a young Canadian girl handed her a doll. 40 years later, Dr. Tran-Davies gifted that doll to her sponsored young Syrian, the next generation of refugee, because it “symbolized the kindness and compassion of Canadians.”

If out of this Forum we have more stories that begin and end like that of Dr Tran Davies, we will have succeeded in our mission. It is possible and, together, we can make this vision a reality.

Merci.