

GZ: 2280/430-KBM/18

Response to UNHCR, Assistant High Commissioner Volker Türk

Case Postale 2500

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Switzerland

7 November 2018

Dear Sir,

We wish to express our sincere thanks for your letter of 26 October 2018 providing us with constructive initial observations to our recently published joint Austrian-Danish “Vision paper for a Better Protection System in a Globalized World”.

We very much appreciate that we share the common view that much more needs to be done by the European Union and its Member States in order to achieve a fairer and better system capable of operating in a globalized world. We must prevent loss of life and suffering along migratory routes, while ensuring that our asylum and migration policies are sustainable.

We are also encouraged to note that we share a common understanding as to the majority of the goals of our vision. A vision which – when implemented – leads to less irregular migration, more protection to people in need, more money for the regions of origin and more trust in European asylum and migration policies. Moreover, on the point of breaking the business model of the traffickers and smugglers, we are reassured by your commitment that more action is required. However, a few of your observations may in our opinion be based on a misconception.

Firstly, it would appear that your reference to “offloading responsibility onto other States or Regions” indicates that this is the purpose of the Danish/Austrian Vision paper. However, this is certainly not the case: in fact, every goal of the vision seeks to generate more support and more effective protection to the most vulnerable as close as possible to their countries of origin and to their hosting populations, to prevent loss of life and exploitation along migratory routes and to ensure solidarity among EU Member States.

Secondly, you raise concerns regarding “transferring asylum seekers out of the EU to third countries” and “externalizing asylum processing”. Again, we believe that these concerns are based on a misunderstanding. The vision paper fully acknowledges that all states must comply with their international obligations and assume responsibility for processing asylum claims submitted on their

territory. As such, in cases where an asylum seeker should be readmitted to another country, the vision paper clearly stipulates that this will only take place on the basis of the principles of first country of asylum and safe third country and in full respect of the principle of non-refoulement. If we cannot, via accelerated border procedures, return persons with manifestly unfounded claims or readmit persons who have already found protection to safe third countries or first countries of asylum, the word "asylum" opens the door to de facto "free movement" in the EU of irregular migrants and migrating refugees fueled by organized criminal networks.

Thirdly, you encourage the EU Member States to demonstrate and expand their resettlement activities. Whilst, we agree that resettlement is a vital tool in providing access to protection for the most vulnerable refugees and have included resettlement as one of the seven goals of the vision paper, resettlement cannot stand alone. In our view, resettlement has to take place in conjunction with the effective implementation of the other six goals of the vision paper.

Finally, we very much welcome your suggestion for further discussion on the way forward and would therefore like to suggest that a first round of discussions take place in Copenhagen or Vienna at a senior official level.

Please accept, Sir, the assurances of our highest consideration.

Inger Støjberg, Minister of Immigration and Integration, of the Kingdom of Denmark and



16/11/2018

Herbert Kickl, Minister of Interior, of the Republic of Austria

