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**EUROPE: THE REFUGEE CRISIS DOES NOT NEED TO BE A POLITICAL CRISIS  
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SOLVAY LIBRARY, BRUSSELS  
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It is a pleasure to be here in Brussels at the Solvay Library. There is one historical link to the International Rescue Committee. The venue's benefactor, Ernest Solvay, is famous for founding the Solvay Conference, perhaps the most prestigious conference in physics and chemistry. And IRC's founder, Albert Einstein, attended the first Solvay Conference in 1911.

I have come here today because the cause that Einstein championed, the right of refugees to receive international protection, is under threat as never before; and the challenge of providing that protection is threatening Europe as never before.

The refugee crisis smouldered as a humanitarian emergency in 2013 and 2014. The challenge in 2016 and 2017 is to make sure it does not become a political emergency. That will take policy ingenuity and political strength – to tackle a very complex problem, debunk myths, and stand up for European values. Around the world, it is easy to make a nativist, nationalist, isolationist case. Easy but wrong. In a world more connected than ever before, regional and global problems need regional and global solutions. That is the purpose of my contribution today.

My argument is this:

- That the European end of the refugee crisis is part of a new global normal, in which unusually large numbers of people are displaced for longer than ever before, and in which the mismatch between their needs and provision is growing by the week.
- That the global response to this crisis must be genuinely global; must address root causes as well as symptoms, which means humanitarian and foreign policy working side by side; and must make humanitarian aid an economic covenant as well as a social one.
- That Europe's first priority is to meet the humanitarian needs of refugees who have already arrived, which means a comprehensive plan to improve living conditions of refugees in Greece and Italy and to process their asylum, family reunion and relocation claims quickly.
- That there needs to be major reform in the focus of humanitarian aid to low and middle income countries in the Middle East, Africa and South Asia, if the needs of refugees are to be met but also if these countries are to shoulder so much of what is a global responsibility.
- That refugee resettlement is a core part of a new global pact. The UN estimates that ten per cent of the global refugee population - the most vulnerable - need resettlement in industrialized countries. IRC calculates that the European share is a minimum of 540,000 over the next five years, or 108,000 per year. This is separate from member states' responsibilities under the

Common European Asylum System. Our experience in the US is that integration of refugees is possible and practical. And without a legal route to hope, people will turn to the smugglers.

- And that if Europe shows competence as well as compassion, then there is scope to spur other countries, like the US, to do more. The two summits coming up in New York in two weeks' time are relevant to this.

The IRC has a European heritage. European institutions, and European member states, provide vital funds for the organisation to address humanitarian suffering around the world. We have active operations in Greece and Serbia. And we are scaling up efforts to offer technical advice on resettlement and integration across Europe, based both on our sixty year track record of resettling refugees across the US and on our overseas expertise supporting refugees in origin and transit countries.

So I am here because Europe matters to us; and in a world where leadership on humanitarian policy is desperately needed, Europe has the opportunity to show it. The prize is not just that refugees will get better treatment but that Europe can take pride in its values once again.

### Global Refugee Crisis

Let me start with the context. Across the world over 65 million people have been forced to flee their homes, 21 million as refugees and the rest displaced within their own countries or waiting on asylum applications. If they were a nation, the population would be similar in size to France or the UK, and bigger than Italy or Spain. And these people are fleeing war and persecution at a time when more people are on the move globally than ever before: Last year 244 million people were living outside their country of origin, as economic or other migrants. As a result, the challenge of specifically protecting and managing refugees is greater and more complex than before.

Today's conflicts burn on for an average of 37 years, making it impossible for many refugees to return home. These refugees are the human casualties of complicated, man-made crises. More than half of refugees – 59 per cent - live not in camps but in cities, towns and villages, alongside the local population. 86 per cent of refugees live in countries that are classified as low- and middle-income, and often fragile too. By law, most cannot work and earn their own living despite being qualified to do so, and they cannot send their children to local schools. They are suffering immense trauma: An estimated one in five displaced and refugee women has suffered sexual violence. And so the needs of refugees are huge and complex, while funding is in short supply. The Syria regional response is only 42% funded for this year. And that's a relatively well-funded crisis.

For Europe, the consequences of global neglect have been felt most strongly in the arrivals of refugees and migrants to the continent. In 2016 3,171 people and counting have died trying to get to Europe, in rickety and over-crowded boats in the Mediterranean and Aegean. For so many desperate people, the smugglers are still the only ones that seem to be offering any promise of protection. Over 160,000 have arrived in Greece this year; nearly 120,000 in Italy.

The arrivals to Greece are mainly Syrians, Iraqis and Afghans, many having tried and failed to build a life in already over-stretched countries like Turkey and Lebanon, to where they first fled. The arrivals to Italy are a more mixed group of predominantly Africans, some fleeing war and persecution, some climate change, some poverty. Some refugees, and some migrants; but all with the right to have their

human rights respected and their asylum claims heard, even as those who don't qualify for refugee status must leave Europe.

## Europe

Let us agree the following. If Lebanon can shelter one Syrian refugee for every five Lebanese citizens, and if Ethiopia can host around 700,000 refugees with a GDP per capita that is less than one 500<sup>th</sup> of that of the EU, then a Europe of 500 million people should be able to manage the million refugees who arrived last year.

From my perspective there are four priorities for European policy to make this a reality.

First, Europe has to live up to its values in helping refugees already here.

Tens of thousands of people are now stuck in limbo, waiting for their asylum claims to be addressed. In Greece, there are currently almost 60,000 refugees, some of them crammed into tents and buildings that are simply not fit for purpose. An estimated 1,528 unaccompanied children are without safe accommodation and 352 of these children are in detention or other closed facilities, some as a result of the EU-Turkey deal. In Italy, the pressure on the asylum system is leading to increased use of refusal of entry notices, which deters people from applying for asylum and having their claim go through due process.

The processing of asylum and relocation applications from Greece and Italy has been way too slow. Only 4,473 refugees have been relocated in total since April, despite the EU's promise to relocate 6,000 per month. The processing must include Afghans and Iraqis who have been excluded from relocation despite having the same rights as Syrians under international law.

Women refugees who have made their way here have survived rape, sexual exploitation, domestic violence, forced prostitution and human trafficking, all of which have been reported on the journeys here - and in Europe itself. We applaud the efforts of donors like IrishAid and DFID, who are recognizing this and making specific funding available both here and in North Africa, but others need to follow suit.

Here is what we think could make a difference in Greece, where the IRC operates extensively:

- First, the establishment and deployment of an Asylum Task Force of 1,250 people, including 500 asylum officials and 500 interpreters to get the processing of asylum, family reunion and relocation claims done, and 250 lawyers to ensure that refugees can access the advice they need to navigate the applications process. The current just over 100 EASO staff and UNHCR lawyers cannot do the job alone.
- Second, safe and appropriate accommodation, by the end of October, for the 1,528 unaccompanied children in Greece including the 352 children currently in detention centers and closed facilities. In the next three months, safe and appropriate accommodation, in houses and apartments not in tents, must also be identified for all refugees in Greece.
- Third, a rapid acceleration of efforts to modernize the response to meet the needs of those stranded in Greece. ECHO has now mobilized funds. They need to be used to move refugees

onto proven financial assistance programmes such as cash payments which bring benefits to refugees and the local community. I know Commissioner Stylianides is working very hard on this issue.

In addition to lifting the burden on Greece and Italy, the EU has an opportunity to get its house in order for future asylum claims as it revises the Common European Asylum System. The goals of the revision - fair sharing of responsibility, decent standardized reception conditions in every country and an effective family reunification process – make sense. The toughest issue is obviously responsibility-sharing. But if countries will not take refugees then surely they should contribute to the effort others make in their stead.

### Better Aid

Second, Europe has to address the sources of the refugee crisis and not just the symptoms, because most of the world's refugees are not in Europe (and Europe does not want them all to come here). First and foremost this means political and diplomatic engagement in addressing the conflicts that drive people to flee their homes. The isolated successful cases of peace making and peacekeeping – in the Balkans, in Sierra Leone, in East Timor – show how hard it is. But that is no reason to give up on the citizens of Syria or Somalia or South Sudan or Afghanistan. But today I'll focus on humanitarian policy.

So my second point is that Europe, as the world's largest humanitarian donor, can lead in providing better aid to low- and middle-income countries where people first seek sanctuary. And since over forty per cent of the world's extreme poor live in fragile or conflict states, there is a growing overlap between displacement and poverty, and certainly plenty of scope for the goals of addressing poverty and helping refugees to come together.

There is a debate about Migration Partnership Frameworks with developing countries. It is easy to think of ways they could go wrong – for refugees, for host communities and for Europe. My interest is that they go right and are seen to go right.

The aim of EU humanitarian policy should be to help refugees achieve dignity and independence in the countries to which they have fled. The EU Treaties support this, highlighting the alleviation of poverty as the key driver of development policy. And it is exactly what European donors – SIDA, Germany, DFID and others, as well as the EU institutions - are delivering on a vast scale with vast impact, day in day out. But it is not ignoble to recognize a secondary effect: the more successful humanitarian policy in countries like Jordan or Nigeria or Pakistan, the less the pressure for flight to Europe.

The EU has treaty-based obligations in respect of development aid, and its use to alleviate poverty in line with humanitarian principles. All EU member states are signatories to the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. The rights of refugees and migrants must always be upheld, and if the humanitarian principles are lost sight of, then the partnerships will go wrong. That means the content of policy matters. So does its transparency. A formal mechanism to involve the European Parliament and civil society organizations in development and implementation of the compacts would be good for all sides.

In terms of content there are to my mind four essential foundations of successful policy:

First, the partnerships need to target people in poverty. At the moment the global aid system is running to catch up with the new concentrations of poverty amongst displaced populations. Europe's strategic partnerships can legitimately lead the way in tackling poverty and vulnerability among the world's displaced. That does not just mean targeting poor and vulnerable populations wherever they live. It also means making sure that the mechanics of the aid system deliver resources where they are needed. The demands for transparency of the Grand Bargain led by Commissioner Georgieva and the High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing are critical in this regard. They must be acted upon because policy makers and the public must be able to follow the money.

Second, the partnerships need to break the short termism of much of humanitarian policy, which leads to neglect of issues like education and livelihoods. The history of humanitarian relief is that it was provided on an "emergency" basis, with the presumption that it was short-term. But that has led to a situation where short-term grants for relief are regularly updated - 89 per cent of global humanitarian aid goes to places that receive it for more than three years - but in a way that lacks strategic purpose. If you take education as an example, you see that 35 per cent of the 61 million out-of-school children under 11 around the world are refugee and displaced kids. So the strategic partnerships need to break with the fiction that refugees are a short-term problem, and build the provision to allow for longer-term thriving.

Third, the partnerships need to support host populations as well as refugees, notably in the economic domain. The counterpart of longer term tenure in host countries must be benefit to host populations. This can come directly, through infrastructure like health centres that support refugees and host populations alike, but also indirectly through economic development of benefit to host populations and refugees. The Jordan "compact" agreed earlier this year between the Jordanian government and the hosts of the London Summit needs to become a viable model. IRC is conducting a landmark study with McKinsey about how Jordanian industry could benefit from favoured trade status with the EU and deliver a large number of jobs in Jordan. We also know from an IRC study in Lebanon that cash distribution benefits refugees and host populations alike. In Lebanon, \$2.13 circulated in the local economy for every \$1 given to refugees. This is relevant in countries like Greece, where the fear is that refugees bring economic burden, but the reality could be of benefit.

Fourth, the programmes inaugurated under the partnerships need to bring new rigour and evidence to the delivery of humanitarian aid. Over the last decade or so there have been over 2,000 rigorous evaluations of programming in stable countries in the last ten years. But there have been just 100 in conflict settings. This means that aid workers have to plan on the basis of experience and intuition more than evidence. And this needs to change. IRC has pledged that all our programmes will become evidence-based or evidence generating. The EU should be a major supporter of this drive, investing relatively small sums - 10-20 million Euros on evidence generation would be a revolution - that could impact the effectiveness of billions spent on humanitarian aid. The Grand Bargain, agreed at the World Humanitarian Summit, is the best guide there is to better effectiveness and should be the starting point for these efforts. It's thanks to DFID and ECHO that the Grand Bargain has got this far. But it must be driven forward to fruition.

### Refugee Resettlement

Third, humanitarian aid abroad is not enough; Europe has to offer safe and legal routes to hope for refugees who need a new start here. The choice for Europe is not whether refugees come here. It is whether they come here legally, in an organized fashion, with priority for the most vulnerable; or

whether they come here illegally, in a disorganized and often criminal and unsafe way, with the most vulnerable lost on the way.

In particular, refugee resettlement has been largely overlooked as a way of organising one stream of managed refugee flows to Europe. Refugee resettlement for the most vulnerable refugees is a way for them to restart their lives; and if there is not a serious hope of resettlement in third countries, then increasing numbers will try and come illegally.

Refugee resettlement does not mean that rights to asylum can be shelved. But it offers more control because the arrivals are planned. In the US, for example, resettled refugees are the most heavily vetted of all new arrivals, going through several rounds of security and other screenings. It enables more responsibility-sharing with those countries already hosting more than their fair share of refugees. And it brings a better chance of successful integration in Europe.

Currently, EU countries resettle only around 9,000 refugees each year. Sweden does it well, processing resettlement cases quickly – an average of six months – and in addition ring-fencing emergency resettlement places, which can be processed in just seven days. And Sweden has already pledged to increase its resettlement commitment to 5,000 places per year – a real contribution to responsibility sharing, coming from a country of its size. The Czech Republic has a small but effective resettlement scheme for urgent medical cases. The UK pledged to resettle 20,000 Syrian refugees and a further 3,000 at risk refugee children and their families, and we are urging the new Government to keep that promise. Romania, Portugal and others are willing to do more. But these efforts do not add up to enough.

If you take UN estimates of the most vulnerable refugees who need resettlement, the IRC calculates that Europe should increase this number significantly by taking in a minimum of 540,000 refugees over the next five years, 108,000 per year, through a legal resettlement programme – a number calculated by taking into account the population and GDP of each country. And there's a mechanism in place to make it happen, in the form of the proposal for an EU-wide resettlement scheme that is now making its way through the European Parliament and the Council.

### Integration

Finally, Europe needs to address head-on fears about the integration of refugees. These fears are felt strongly on both sides of the Atlantic. But our experience of sixty years' resettlement in the US, in over 20 US cities large (like NYC) and small (like Boise) shows that integrating refugees is not just right; it is practical and smart. Eighty-five per cent of new refugee arrivals to the US who are managed by the IRC end up in employment within 180 days, ultimately bringing benefit to the US economy. The same could be true in the EU: The IMF has already said that GDP could be 0.25 per cent higher by 2020 as a result of the refugee arrivals last year, and between 0.5 per cent and 1 per cent higher in Germany and Sweden, where the bulk of them settled, if integration into the labour market is successful.

Some simple rules apply:

- The vetting has to be effective, along with follow-up after one year when refugees become entitled to Green Cards in the case of the US, and five years when they become entitled to citizenship.

- Jobs are vital. There is no better means of integration. Developing CVs, providing training for interviews, matchmaking refugees with potential employers are indispensable. We have seen positive initiatives in Germany, for example Siemens providing housing for up to 500 refugees, expanding their internship programmes for another 100 young refugees, and offering more apprenticeships, German language classes and training.
- Many refugees care more about their kids than themselves. So education for kids and opportunities for them are non-negotiable. And it pays off. In high school in the US, refugees outperform native speakers in achieving diplomas: 95 per cent compared to 65 per cent for the general population.
- Finally, the US system shows the benefits of partnership with the community sector. Community groups, churches, English language training colleges, diaspora organisations. And there is a groundswell of support in Europe to build on. Take for example the mentoring system for newly arrived parents of refugee children at some primary schools in London, or the Italian microfinance scheme for refugees to launch their own businesses.

Much of the work of integration falls to member states. But European institutions can help. This means prioritising integration across all EU policies, such as the upcoming New Skills Agenda, the URBAN agenda and the European Social Fund, and increasing the budget for integration under AMIF. The newly formed European Integration Network will also have a crucial role to play in coordinating and sharing examples of best practice, and must be given sufficient resources and political backing.

The fact is that, if properly integrated, refugees will find jobs, pay taxes, start businesses, send their children to school, shop locally and actively contribute to their communities and societies.

### Conclusion

The refugee crisis is a human tragedy. But it does not need to become a political disaster. It requires big-hearted commitments at this month's global summits and hard-headed action plans for the years of follow-up.

At the moment, the UN Summit on 19 September is mired in compromise. It looks set to achieve little. The lowest common denominator is very low indeed. But a strong European position in advance of that summit will maximise the chance that at President Obama's summit a day later there are substantive commitments. These need to come from across the OECD, and include the Gulf as well as other rising economies. But Europe can lead the way. And it needs to – because the problems that are driving people from their homes are not going away.

Europe exported refugees to the rest of the world in the last century. This century its social, political and economic success is attracting people here. This is the reality of the modern world. There is no point ducking it. Europe needs to step up and deal with it.