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Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe
Commission des Eglises auprès des Migrants en Europe
Kommission der Kirchen für Migranten in Europa



Press announcement ALDE-CCME-UNHCR of 5th May

Refugee resettlement: Europe can do more to solve refugee situations globally

Lunch meeting in European Parliament to discuss new EU initiatives in global refugee protection

A lunch debate "Refugee resettlement - protecting refugees, sharing responsibilities" will tomorrow 6th May bring together MEPs, representatives of the other EU institutions, the UN refugee agency UNHCR and civil society organisations in the European Parliament in Brussels. The debate will examine how the resettlement of refugees to EU member states can contribute to resolving refugee crisis situations around the globe and serve as a tool to protect the most vulnerable among the world's refugees. Refugee resettlement is a process by which refugees, which have fled their home country and found temporary protection in another country but cannot settle there, resettled to a third country where they find permanent protection.

Tomorrow's debate is hosted by the two Liberal MEPs Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert (NL) and Sarah Ludford (UK) and co-organised by the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME), the European Council for Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) and UNHCR. It comes at a crucial time: a steadily increasing number of EU member states is engaging in refugee resettlement; recent discussions in the EU Justice and Home Affairs Council focussed on possibilities of resettling Iraqi refugees, who have in Jordan and Syria found temporary protection, to EU member states.

The debate will commence with introductory presentations on the practical aspects of resettlement, followed by a discussion on the future of resettlement to the EU. Representatives of UNHCR and CCME will give an introduction to resettlement. Representatives of the European Commission, ECRE and the hosting MEPs will comment on future policies of the EU and its member states on resettlement.

ALDE MEP Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, who is hosting the debate explained "It is clear that resettlement forms an important part of the external dimension of EU asylum policy. Resettlement of refugees in EU territory reflects the EU's commitment to show international solidarity and to co-share the burden of the countries in the regions of origin and transit. The significance of the EU commitment, however, is very limited at this very moment. Member States should increasingly be obliged to participate actively in resettlement activities in order to have a real impact."

"As a complement to asylum systems, resettlement is a way of offering protection and durable solutions, while showing solidarity with other countries", says UNHCR Representative to the EU Institutions Judith Kumin.

Doris Peschke, General secretary of CCME, expressed high hopes towards the debate: "refugee resettlement was for the last two decades the forgotten option of refugee protection in Europe. This is changing Tomorrow's debate will be an important step in identifying how the EU can do more to protect refugees globally".

Note to editors:

The lunch debate will take place tomorrow 6th May from 13.00-14.45 in room ASP 5 G 1 the European Parliament, rue Wiertz 47, 1047 Brussels

Refugee resettlement is the process by which refugees, who have to flee their home country and find initial, but insufficient or temporary protection in another country, are resettled into a third country and find permanent protection and a durable, sustainable solution there. While around one hundred thousand refugees are annually resettled to the US, Canada and Australia, resettlement is since the 1960ies scarcely used in Europe: currently only seven EU member states carry out resettlement, resettling around 3.500 refugees annually.

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PROGRAMME

Lunch discussion

Refugee resettlement – protecting refugees, sharing responsibility

What Europe can do to resolve refugee crisis situations globally

European Parliament Brussels, Room ASP 5G1 Tuesday, 6th May 2008 13.00-14.45

Co-organised by the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME), the European Council for Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) and UNHCR – the UN Refugee Agency

Hosted by MEPs Mrs Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert and Baroness Sarah Ludford (ALDE)

13.00-13.15 Welcome

- MEP Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert
- Doris Peschke, Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME)

13.15-13.45 What is resettlement, how does it work?

- Judith Kumin, UNHCR EU office: general intro to resettlement & why the EU should engage more in resettlement
- Doris Peschke/Torsten Moritz, CCME: resettlement today – five questions, five answers

Question & Answers

13.45-14.40 What future for resettlement in the EU

- Trees Wijn-Maatman, ECRE/Dutch Refugee Council: Resettlement as part of a future EU refugee protection system
- Angela Martini, European Commission: future EU initiatives
- MEP Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert: The European Parliament's role in promoting refugee resettlement

Discussion

14.40-14.45 Concluding remarks

- MEP Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert
- Doris Peschke, CCME

For more information on resettlement please visit:

<http://www.ccme.be/secretary/NEWS/index.html>, <http://www.ecre.org/topics/resettlement>,
or <http://www.unhcr.org/protect/3bb2eadd6.html>

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