

**Address by Federal Minister of the Interior Dr
Thomas de Maizière**

on the occasion of the

**Conference on the Syrian Refugee Situation -
Supporting Stability in the Region**

held on 28 October 2014

Ladies and gentlemen,

I do not wish to repeat that millions of Syrian refugees and displaced persons are currently living under extremely difficult conditions. Lives filled with violence, pain, want and fear. Let me once again pay tribute to Syria's neighbouring countries for your outstanding humanity and your great efforts in admitting such huge numbers of refugees.

The international community must help you. Germany will continue to help you. Also in future, assistance will mainly consist in supporting your efforts and the activities of international organizations on the ground. We can reach out to the greatest number of refugees in the region itself and provide relief — not only with money. The Federal Agency for Technical Relief, for example, provides bilateral assistance by ensuring water supply and sanitation and other infrastructure in refugee camps in Jordan and North Iraq.

Other EU partners also provide support. But much more should be done! Much more assistance can be provided within the framework of the EU civil protection mechanism. The European Commission has announced to get in touch with the Member States once again because of its most recent needs assessment. It is high time. Winter is coming and there is not much time left to provide sufficient safe and warm accommodation for refugees in the region.

You may know that we - together with UNHCR - have considered the question of whether we should intensify our efforts in the crisis region by adding another, complementary element, namely the active and qualified admission of refugees to places outside this region. Last year we demonstrated that this is possible and reasonable. Within the framework of admission programmes of the Federal Government and the federal states we provided some 30,000 places for refugees.

20,000 people have already received entry visas - most of them have already arrived in Germany.

Compared with the total number of refugees the figure seems extremely low - a drop in the sea, as you may say. In early 2011 some 30,000 Syrian nationals lived in Germany; currently there are approximately 100,000. Most Syrian refugees come spontaneously to seek protection in Germany. Since the beginning of the war more than 50,000 Syrian nationals have applied for asylum - 4,300 people alone last month. We provide protection to all of them.

Humanitarian admission programmes or resettlement programmes can have a real added value, however, if selection criteria are carefully chosen. In addition to admitting people in need of protection in humanitarian cases, such as illness, torture or other traumatic experiences, we see that it would be

good for refugees, for example, to stay with their relatives in Germany. People who have grown up in Germany, who have studied or lived here for other reasons know what to expect. In the end, we want to help refugees so that after the end of the conflict they can actively support the rebuilding of Syria.

These are good reasons to offer refugees to come to a country outside the crisis region. Maybe you can think of more good reasons? Maybe you are considering admission programmes or want to expand existing ones? I would be very pleased to hear that.

I hope that many of the countries present today will also be represented at the upcoming UNHCR pledging conference in Geneva on 9 December and make generous offers.

Let there be no doubt: Refugees leaving the crisis region within the framework of

humanitarian admission programmes or through resettlement will only constitute a small minority in the face of nearly 10 million Syrian refugees.

But these admission programmes can make a big difference. Not only for those concerned, but also for us, because we can extend a helping hand to refugees in need of our protection and admit them to our societies. Our citizens, particularly in the EU Member States, will then clearly see the consequences of war, not only by watching TV or reading the paper. They will live together with refugees and understand much better how important it is to provide more assistance on the ground.