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Declaration of the International Mayors' Conference N-O-W (Vienna)

We share the awareness that we are faced today with one of the most challenging humanitarian situations since generations and that we are responsible for one another as well as for our planet.

We share the awareness that we must build bridges and find ways to uphold the cohesion at the core of our societies.

We share the awareness that we need to empathize with the distress and confusion of the other. We have to listen and ask questions, learn from one another and find answers together, to allow sustainable solutions.

With this awareness we – participants, organisers, initiators, supporters of the International Mayors' Conference N-O-W 2016 – have all met to support and assist all those who have been abandoned, attacked, and have come to the limits of their strength.

Encouraged by new friendships and encounters, enriched by the sharing of experiences and with the new knowledge coming from very diverse communities we are today more than ever convinced:

This crisis can be overcome.

We therefore declare:

In view of this humanitarian catastrophe we urge for diplomatic and security policy actions to bring an end to war and conflicts. We urge for a safe and secure environment in those countries people have to flee from.

We share the awareness of the urgent need to establish safe and legal escape routes to Europe as to avoid dangerous situations on the journey and to put an end to human trafficking.

Therefore it is essential that EU-Missions and embassies facilitate the granting of visas. Equally urgent is the creation of hotspots (adequately supported financially and professionally) to enable efficient and fast registration of human beings seeking refuge.

We call upon all those who think and feel as Europeans to endorse and stand for regulations living up to humanistic values. Therefore we ask for a speedy distribution of the refugees, taking into consideration their deep longing for stability and taking into account the resources of the hosting communities. A fast integration would allow refugees to become fellow citizens as well as strengthen those who one day want to return to their home countries.

We share the awareness that even the best diplomatic efforts will not be able to put a stop to wars in the near future. Therefore we are urging for immediate humanitarian help in Syria's neighbouring countries. We must not abandon Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Greece and Italy in this utterly challenging situation. In addition Turkey needs support from the international community in finding a viable solution with its Kurdish citizens so as to avoid a next wave of refugees.

We share the awareness that the first months and years of a successful integration process are crucial. It is essential to provide accommodation, education, sharing of European values and work opportunities. Education and schooling of children and young adults is essential.

We share the awareness that with the arrival of newcomers a great number of citizens fear for their safety, their jobs and accommodations. We therefore believe in the necessity of an open discussion of how to recreate the view that Europe is and will be a place of wellbeing and stability for all. We should not forget to always mention the silent relentless efforts of local communities, neighbourhoods, civil society and the hard working mayors.

In these past days we have learned a lot from the experiences of different communities and can outline plausible paths to facilitate responsible and balanced refugee policies on the local, regional, national and European level. We shall report in more detail in a final document.

We share the awareness that we can never solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them. Therefore we address

- the citizens already committed to contribute to solutions
- the political stakeholders
- the European public at large:

**We are all connected in this obligation.
We are all in this together.**

Vienna, January 2016

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