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Rt Hon George Howarth MP
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Dear George

Thank you for your letter of 15 August regarding the Government's response to the migration crisis and the resettlement of refugees.

We are clear about our moral responsibility to assist those who are suffering as a result of the migration crisis. This includes providing financial and practical support in conflict regions, working upstream to prevent people from having to make perilous journeys, and providing protection to those who need it.

The Government's approach is to provide humanitarian support to those most affected by conflict and to resettle the most vulnerable directly to the UK. Helping the countries where refugees come from to reduce the push factors; build stability; create livelihoods; and go after the criminal gangs and trafficking networks profiting from human misery are all key to an effective solution. The UK has led the way in seeking a comprehensive and sustainable response, one which provides the greatest impact to the most number of people in need.

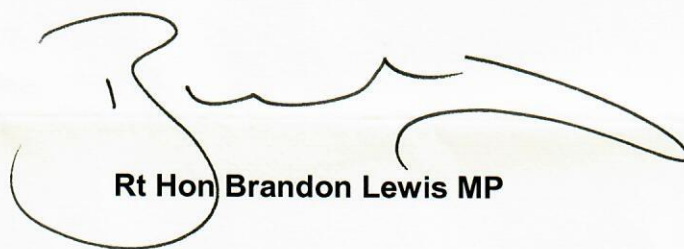
We believe this approach is the best way to ensure that the UK's help has the greatest impact for the majority of refugees who remain in the region and their host countries, whilst recognising that for some vulnerable people the only solution is to resettle them to countries like the UK. The UK has pledged over £2.46 billion in aid in response to the events in Syria and the region, our largest ever humanitarian response to a single crisis.

In order to reduce suffering along the key migration routes, we assist vulnerable people on the move, inform them about the risks of onward journeys and support alternatives, such as voluntary return or resettlement in a third country.

Since October 2015, the Government has allocated more than £175 million humanitarian assistance to the Mediterranean migration crisis. This support provides life-saving assistance, such as shelter, water and sanitation, food, medical care, and protection for the most vulnerable migrants and refugees, helps build capacity of host governments to manage migration so that it is safe and orderly.

In terms of resettlement, Eurostat figures show that in 2016 the UK resettled more refugees than any other EU country and a third of all resettlement to the EU was to the UK. The UK operates four resettlement schemes: Gateway, Mandate, the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) and the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme (VCRS). Our resettlement schemes offer a safe and legal route to the UK for the most vulnerable refugees rather than risking the hazardous journey to Europe which has tragically cost so many lives. We have partnered with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to resettle those in greatest need of assistance, including people requiring urgent medical treatment, survivors of violence and torture, and women and children at risk. The UNHCR is uniquely placed to identify those living in formal refugee camps, informal settlements and host communities who would benefit most from resettlement to the UK. By 2020, we will have resettled over 23,000 refugees from conflict regions, around half of whom will be children. A total of over 7,000 people have already been resettled in the UK under the Syrian VPRS since September 2015.

We remain subject to EU legislation until we have left the EU so there is no immediate change to the UK's position under EU law as a result of the referendum. The question of how the UK deals with asylum claimants arriving in the UK from EU Member States, and shares information with the EU and international partners will be a key consideration as part of the process of leaving the EU and establishing a new relationship.



Rt Hon Brandon Lewis MP