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Transcript of an address by:

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1 THE RT. HON. DAVID MILIBAND: Thank you very much. It is very,
2 very nice to be back in London and to see so many familiar
3 faces. I always feel a great sense of buzz when I arrive in
4 this city, even coming out of a pretty buzzy city such as
5 New York.

6 I am conscious that you have been sitting patiently for
7 some time, but, interpreting in a relatively brief way the
8 offer to do a keynote lecture, I remember that when I was at
9 university the definition of a lecture was the passing of the
10 notes of the lecturer to the notes of the student without
11 going through the minds of either. *[Laughter]* I will try and
12 avoid just ploughing through, but I know people are going to
13 have questions.

14 I was asked to speak for about 20 minutes about the
15 European refugee crisis, which is actually a global refugee
16 crisis, and try and apply the lens of this report in thinking
17 about it.

18 Two things struck me, just listening to the two
19 presentations we have had. One is the shift in the balance of
20 power from institutions, be they governmental or businesses,
21 to individuals -- what I call the civilian surge -- which you
22 see in countries democratic and non-democratic. Remember,
23 every government, whether it is in a democracy or an
24 autocracy, lives in coalition with its own people. The lesson
25 of Egypt in 2011 is that even an autocracy lives in coalition

1 with its own people.

2 That civilian surge is gaining momentum, and the ability
3 for people to communicate and to organise is unparalleled.
4 The fact that it is part of a global trend towards higher
5 levels of education, never mind higher levels of
6 information-flow, fuels it. I would argue that rising
7 education is the greatest fuel for the kind of civilian
8 empowerment that is described in some of the presentations or
9 is implied there.

10 The second thing though, and the message I took away for
11 leaders, whether they are in politics, business or NGOs, is
12 that there is no communications answer to the problems that
13 exist. For politics, there is no political answer without
14 a policy answer. One of my reflections about the global
15 challenge that exists for politicians of the centre right and
16 the centre left is that, fundamentally, the reason that the
17 extremes are being empowered is that the answers of the centre
18 right and centre left are perceived by too many people not to
19 be good enough for the problems that exist. On the centre
20 right you see that in the US at the moment, where the central
21 demand of voters is to preserve the social order, sometimes
22 called "social conservatism", and leaders of the centre right
23 are being outflanked on the harder right. The central demand
24 of leaders on the centre left is obviously to use the tools of
25 government and the alliance of government and private sector

1 to tackle problems like inequality.

2 People are essentially saying in the data that they want
3 better answers to those challenges. When we say politics has
4 to be about answers and not just anger -- or when I used to
5 say that politics has to be about answers and not just anger
6 -- then there is a real challenge built into that, because the
7 challenges of conserving social order if you are on the centre
8 right, or of tackling inequality on the centre left, which are
9 the central demands that voters on the centre right and centre
10 left ask of their leaders, are very hard questions. Trying to
11 pretend that you have an answer without the substance, there
12 are obviously huge issues there.

13 I want to try and weave that notion of a civilian surge,
14 on the one hand, and of answers and not just anger on the
15 other, through a discussion of the refugee crisis, what it
16 portends and what it demands, because I think the demands of
17 it are very significant.

18 This is the argument I was going to make about the
19 refugee crisis. First of all, it is caused by deep, secular,
20 long-term global trends; the implosion in the Islamic world;
21 the weakness of about 25 to 30 states around the world who
22 struggle to meet basic needs and to keep the differences
23 amongst their own population within peaceful boundaries; the
24 weakness and division of the international political system,
25 in some ways a weaker international political system certainly

1 than at any time since the end of the Cold War and in some
2 ways for longer. Those are three deep, long-term trends. The
3 refugee crisis, I would argue, is here to stay.

4 Secondly, the refugee crisis causes political
5 instability as well as being a reflection of political
6 instability. Traditionally, I guess when I went into the
7 humanitarian sector two years ago, the obvious equation is
8 that political instability and conflict leads to humanitarian
9 crisis, but the line of causation also moves from humanitarian
10 crisis to political instability. Central to my mind in that
11 is not actually Germany. Just think about the situation in
12 the Middle East, where countries like Lebanon and Jordan are
13 coping with a refugee population that is 10% or 20% of their
14 total population. Think of the situation in Kenya, which for
15 many years has dealt with hundreds of thousands of Somalis.
16 Think of the Afghan/Pakistan situation. The line of causation
17 does not just run from instability to crisis: it runs from
18 crisis to instability.

19 The third thing I was going to try and argue is that we
20 need some new responses to the scale of the
21 refugee/humanitarian crisis that exists around the world.

22 I will offer those reflections from the distinctive viewpoint
23 of a global NGO founded by Albert Einstein in 1933, when he
24 fled to New York from Germany, an NGO that is, I think it is
25 fair to say, actually unique in the following way. We are an

1 international humanitarian relief agency. We work in 30
2 countries. There are 22,000 staff of the IRC working today.
3 Last year, we helped 23 million people with health education,
4 protection for women and kids and economic livelihood support.
5 But we are also a refugee resettlement agency. Since
6 Einstein's day we now resettle 10,000 new refugees into the US
7 every year in 26 US cities. So we can see the arc of crisis
8 from the war zone to the neighbouring states, to the transit
9 routes and then to refugee resettlement.

10 I think it is worth just pausing and recognising the
11 extraordinary global nature of people flows as a result of
12 conflict. Sixty million people were displaced last year from
13 their homes by conflict; 40 million were internally displaced
14 -- that means they are staying within their own country; 20
15 million refugees were displaced across borders.

16 Syria is the poster child for this scale of tumult; that
17 is why it was on the video. Seven million were internally
18 displaced, 4.5 million are refugees and 13.5 million are still
19 in need of humanitarian relief inside the country. To some of
20 us, not surprisingly, those problems have eventually spilled
21 out of the Middle East and spilled into Europe. More than
22 a million people arrived last year -- more than half of them
23 from Syria, but 20% of them from Afghanistan.

24 I guess the important point for the context we are
25 meeting today is that the chaotic policy response that has

1 existed in Europe over the last couple of years makes the
2 Europe crisis a microcosm not just for the reasons that people
3 flee but for the kind of response that refugees and displaced
4 people traditionally, conventionally find -- desperate people
5 risking their lives, getting round the authorities rather than
6 working with them, and relying on an ill-co-ordinated policy
7 response, because certainly, sitting in New York, that is what
8 the European response has seemed.

9 I think it is worth asking: how did we end up in
10 a situation where the Pope says, in 2014, that the failure of
11 European response to the refugee crisis represents "the
12 globalisation of indifference"? It is an extraordinarily
13 resonant phrase -- "the globalisation of indifference".
14 Essentially, he was pointing the finger at all of us and
15 saying that the central feature of globalisation is not
16 prosperity/opportunity; it is actually a failure of
17 compassion.

18 Now, the striking thing is that, after he said it,
19 nothing happened in 2014. The prime ministers of Greece and
20 Italy were jumping up and down, saying, "This is a major
21 crisis for our countries", but it was convenient for the rest
22 of Europe not to respond and not to help.

23 So I think it is worth understanding that the causes of
24 the chaotic and unsuccessful policy response to the refugee
25 crisis have both structural elements that are deep-seated and

1 contingent elements that were just a matter of policy failure.

2 The structural ones are worth understanding, I think.
3 First, it is 100 times harder to solve a problem if you start
4 late. The fact that there were already half a million
5 refugees in Germany, or probably more actually -- 600,000
6 refugees in Germany -- by the middle of last year meant that
7 Mrs. Merkel, and the rest of Europe, frankly, were playing
8 catch-up. So the late start sets you up to be playing away
9 from home in a very, very difficult situation.

10 I would argue that the breakdown of talks between Turkey
11 and the EU four or five years ago has also contributed to the
12 scale. Turkey turned away from Europe; Europe turned away
13 from Turkey in 2011, and they have been talking past each
14 other until we desperately needed each other at the end of
15 last year.

16 I would also say that the failure to uphold the laws of
17 war inside Syria, the failure of accountability for those who
18 are committing war crimes inside Syria, and the fact that
19 multiple war crimes are then committed, has undoubtedly been
20 an incredible driver of people flows. Regarding those
21 pictures on Lesbos in Greece, the most surprising thing for me
22 when I went to Lesbos in September was the number of people
23 who had come straight from Syria. I had not picked this up,
24 but there were graduate students of the University of Damascus
25 saying they were being drafted into Assad's army and they did

1 not want to commit war crimes. There were people saying,
2 "Look, I had Assad bombing me with barrel bombs. I have got
3 ISIS round the corner and now the Russians are bombing too".
4 People were leaving direct from Syria. So there has been the
5 failure of Syrian protection inside Syria.

6 But there have also been some contingent problems. The
7 absence of a legal route to Europe has empowered the
8 smugglers. The people smugglers prosper when there is not
9 a legal route to hope. €1200 a person/€600 for kids and
10 babies is the current going rate. Another problem is weak
11 support for the neighbours of Syria who bear the greatest
12 load, Jordan and Lebanon most obviously, and I think
13 a rose-tinted hope that the war would end, sometimes fuelled
14 by people from within the Middle East. In a way, you have
15 a perfect recipe for the collapse of trust in those structural
16 and contingent circumstances I have described.

17 What needs to happen? The obvious point, and this is
18 why I made the point at the beginning that we as IRC work both
19 in the war zones and we do work on resettlement, is that you
20 have to tackle the symptoms and the causes together. I think
21 that is hard, but it is the only plausible narrative to tell
22 about how you are going to get to grips with the scale of the
23 problem.

24 Just very briefly to run through, dire conditions exist
25 when people arrive in Europe; it didn't actually make it

1 explicit in the film. Until the IRC builds a camp in the
2 north of Lesbos, people are expected to walk 60km from the
3 north of the island to the south of the island to reach the UN
4 registration point. These are people who didn't know whether
5 they were going to live or die when they set out on these
6 boats. By the way, the smugglers don't get on the boats. You
7 rent a space on the boat, but the person who is selling you
8 the space doesn't get on the boat with you; you are expected
9 to drive the boat yourself.

10 The dire conditions that exist when people arrive are
11 not difficult to fix and need to be fixed, and it shouldn't be
12 NGOs having to step into the front line in the way that we
13 are.

14 Secondly, the commitment to refugees to relocate and to
15 make sure that it is not Germany or Germany and Sweden alone
16 bearing the burden seems to me to be an essential principle
17 that needs to be upheld.

18 Thirdly, the deal with Turkey needs to be extended. The
19 \$3 billion deal is a short-term deal, but it needs to be
20 extended to Lebanon and Jordan. I might as well say now,
21 essentially, the old model of help for refugees, which is that
22 you got short-term social service that came from the
23 international community and then when the war was over you
24 went home, that has broken down because the average refugee is
25 out of their own country for 17 years. The new bargain has to

1 be that people have to be allowed to work in the countries
2 that they move to as refugees, but, in return, that country
3 cannot be expected to bear the whole burden. At the moment,
4 in a country like Jordan and Lebanon, the World Bank is not
5 allowed to be active because it is classified as a middle
6 income country. So you can understand why the Jordanians are
7 saying, "Look, we have got to be really careful about how we
8 handle this issue of economic livelihoods and work for
9 refugees". You know the debate in this country about that.
10 But there is a deal to be done where refugees become
11 economically productive but, in return, the country that is
12 hosting them gets much, much greater levels of economic
13 support.

14 Fourthly, we need to make a success of refugee
15 resettlement, and I will say a bit more about that. When
16 Canada can take 25,000 refugees, as they have just announced,
17 Australia can take 18,000, we are arguing in the US that the
18 US has to take 100,000, as a substantive commitment to the
19 people, but also as a symbolic show of solidarity with the
20 neighbours who are bearing the greatest share of the burden.

21 Then, finally, the scale of civilian abuse inside Syria
22 is a geopolitical issue and not just a humanitarian issue.
23 Even if the war doesn't end, the way in which it is being
24 fought is leading to untold suffering. It is 100 times more
25 difficult to re-build the country after the war is over, but

1 also it is contributing to the refugee flow.

2 In my last six or seven minutes I want to try and turn
3 to how this relates to the report and what the lessons are. It
4 seems to me that the first place to start is that it is not
5 enough to have a policy response; you also have to debunk the
6 myths. The myths are that the West bears an unfair share of
7 the burden of refugees. In fact, 86% of the world's refugees
8 are in poor countries and not in rich countries.

9 Myth: refugees and migrants are the same. No, they are
10 not. Refugees have a well-founded fear of persecution.
11 Migrants are just seeking a better life. It is not that one
12 is good or the other is bad, but they are different.

13 Myth no. 3 is that the authorities can't tell the
14 difference between a refugee and a migrant. Fact: Europe, in
15 2014, sent back 50,000 people because they didn't qualify as
16 refugees. So there is a status determination test and it is
17 possible to tell the difference.

18 Myth: single men are able to look after themselves so
19 they should not be refugees. Fact: we are publishing a report
20 today on the status of single men in Lebanon. I think 49% of
21 the people arriving in Europe in the last quarter are single
22 men. Surprise, surprise, nine out of 10 single men in Lebanon
23 are getting no aid. The biggest driver for them to become
24 refugees into Europe is that they are getting no support in
25 the neighbouring states that they have fled to.

1 Myth: integration is not practical. I now live in the
2 US and the evidence there is overwhelming: 150,000 Vietnamese
3 were arriving every year in 1979/80/81/82. Teach English, get
4 the kids in school, get the parents a job, get them on the
5 path to citizenship, and you create productive and patriotic
6 citizens. Of course the bigger the numbers, the harder it is,
7 but the better the system, the easier it is.

8 Then I do want to make this point. This is not exactly
9 a humanitarian point, but I think it is close enough for me to
10 make it. Myth: by withdrawing from the EU, Britain will
11 somehow push the problems associated with the refugee flow
12 further away. Brexit -- the UK leaving the European Union --
13 does not change geography; it does not shift reality; it does
14 not change the mindset of the people who are fleeing from
15 Syria, Afghanistan or from elsewhere. In fact I would argue
16 that Brexit would leave Britain more exposed, not less
17 exposed, because it would reduce co-operation and it would
18 make co-operation more difficult. I think Alan Johnson has
19 made this point really well. He says that Brexit would move
20 the customs post from Calais to Dover; it would actually move
21 it 26 miles across the Channel.

22 So the myth that, by withdrawing from the EU, Britain
23 will somehow insulate itself from these global problems seems
24 to me absolutely untrue. Well, the myth is not untrue -- it
25 is a myth to claim that Brexit will somehow insulate the UK.

1 Now, what are the other lessons? I thought it was
2 really good that you had this up on the slide -- you didn't
3 talk about it, but values. Compassion cannot be an add-on;
4 that would be my way of putting it. Aylan Kurdi could have
5 been anyone's son. Europe does not face a choice between
6 values and security. It faces a choice between living up to
7 its values or not living up to its values -- the starting
8 point.

9 Second, though, and this is really important for my
10 sector, which is the humanitarian sector, compassion without
11 competence drains trust. If you fail to deliver on your
12 promises, if you undermine the champions of compassion, then
13 you get the trust gap. One of the things that I am going to
14 say in a moment is that I think there is a real need for
15 business and NGOs to work hard together about defining the
16 right kind of outcomes for the humanitarian sector, because it
17 has to be about corporate social results and not just
18 corporate social responsibility. You can show responsibility
19 but you need to get results, and that is a challenge for our
20 sector, but one that we are embracing, and I think it is a
21 challenge for business too.

22 Third, I was very pleased you put this out here. The
23 "message" is most effectively delivered not by words but by
24 actions of the people concerned. There are 3,500 Muslims in
25 the US armed forces. They are the best advocates for

1 integration in the US. Negative messages, Cologne, et cetera,
2 can proceed very fast. The alternative is not a lot of
3 talking; it is a lot of doing by people who are actually at
4 the heart of it.

5 Having said that, spin matters. The story about the
6 Bataclan "Syrian passport", which turned out to be a fake, was
7 halfway round the world before the truth got its boots on --
8 in fact it was all the way round the world before the truth
9 got its boots on. A lot of people became very, very scared
10 about something that turned out not to be true.

11 Finally, I still have this naïve belief that in the end
12 the public get to the truth. When you report that in some
13 countries businesses are more trusted than government, there
14 are some rational reasons for that. In places where
15 government is corrupt, then people look to business to be not
16 corrupt. Sometimes they look to armed opposition groups who
17 are less corrupt than the government.

18 I want to make this point too. None of us is trusted
19 when it looks like the problems are getting worse rather than
20 better. That is really the issue on the European refugee
21 crisis. We are all implicated in it in the eyes of people who
22 are rightly looking to us to put it right.

23 Let me just finish on the following point: what can you
24 do? You are all leaders of the corporate sector. We would
25 like you to do something. Many of you are doing things. What

1 does that mean? For those of you who have US operations, your
2 employees could be the best conceivable mentors to the
3 refugees who are arriving in the US. For those of you who
4 have global operations, your expertise can really help us run
5 an organisation of 22,000 people, when at the moment we spend
6 93 cents of every dollar on the front line on programmes, not
7 on the infrastructure of our organisations. At JFK last
8 night, at the airport, a guy came up to me and said, "I am
9 really pleased to meet you. You probably don't know this, but
10 we are running a pro bono leadership development/managed
11 development programme for 120 middle-managers in your
12 organisation". That is real help from a company that has real
13 expertise as an HR company, which really makes a difference to
14 us. Whether you are in the law or a management consultancy or
15 supply chains, you can help us a lot.

16 I would not be doing my job if I did not also say that,
17 while we want a relationship and not just a transaction,
18 a transaction that involves donations is very important
19 because we are 86% funded by governments. Governments are
20 great partners, but they necessarily have a different approach
21 to risk than private donors.

22 Let me just finish with the following point. If I think
23 about the big problems that I have been challenged with in the
24 different jobs that I have had, whether in environment,
25 education, economy or foreign policy, none of them gets solved

1 by one of the sectors that you have been talking about. The
2 recipe for any big problem that I have seen solved is
3 government leadership. Anyone who tells you they can solve
4 the problem without government leadership is misleading you.
5 Governments do need to lead -- that is what they are elected
6 to do. But they can't do it on their own. Government
7 leadership has to be allied to business innovation, and
8 I would extend that and say organisational innovation, because
9 I think NGOs can innovate strongly as well.

10 Third is popular mobilisation. I can't remember who it
11 was who said that "a foreign policy born in the minds of the
12 few and carried in the hearts of none is doomed to fail". It
13 is a great notion which does not just apply to foreign policy.
14 A domestic policy that is born in the hearts of the few and
15 carried in the hearts of none is also doomed to fail.

16 The link is government leadership, business
17 organisational innovation and popular mobilisation. In our
18 own small way, that is what we are trying to do at IRC with
19 our emphasis on clear outcomes for the work we do. I am not
20 just saying we are about life changing and life saving, but
21 actually explaining how we are measuring ourselves. I am
22 saying that we want all of our programmes to be evidence-based
23 or evidence-generating so that there is some quality assurance
24 built in, ensuring that 90% plus of our staff are local staff,
25 they are the best broadcasters of the message locally, because

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that is where our greatest risk is to the security of our
people, and as much transparency as possible so that we can
mobilise globally. Thank you very much indeed. *[Applause]*

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