Potsdam Statement on "Safe Haven Cities"

In the summer of 2018, the civilian rescue ship *Lifeline* lay in the Mediterranean Sea off the European coast for an entire week with 234 people on board. Although several European countries and cities were willing to receive the people that had been rescued from distress at sea, the ship was refused to enter a port.

In view of this fact, the initiative "*Seebrücke – schafft Sichere Häfen*" (Pier – creating Safe Havens) was founded. To date, more than 50 German cities have declared solidarity with this initiative. In recent months, the cities have sent numerous resolutions and appeals to the federal government and have signaled their willingness to take in refugees rescued from distress at sea. They have set an example of solidarity and compassion and are ready to do their part in ending the humanitarian catastrophe in the Mediterranean Sea. In the Federal Republic of Germany, the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community, however, does not seem to act constructively when it comes to supporting offers of direct aid.

With this situation in mind, representatives of several cities that have expressed solidarity with the "*Seebrücke – schafft Sichere Häfen*" initiative met in the Brandenburg state capital of Potsdam in April 2019.

As a result of this meeting, we, the "Safe Haven Cities" reiterate our willingness to additionally receive those that seek shelter after having been rescued from distress at sea. In doing so, we are expressing our solidarity with the *Seebrücke* initiative and the civilian sea rescue efforts in the Mediterranean Sea.

In our capacity as "Safe Haven Cities" we demand an immediate commitment from the Federal Government and the Federal Ministry of the Interior to enable willing municipalities and communities to receive refugees that were rescued from distress in the Mediterranean Sea. We call on the Federal Government and the Federal Minister of the Interior to support us, the "Safe Haven Cities" in our efforts to receive and accommodate refugees and to help finance these endeavors.

We, the "Safe Haven Cities", demand from the Federal Government and the Federal Minister of the Interior to determine a distribution coefficient based on constitutional principles for those that seek protection after having been rescued from distress at sea. To this end, we call for an agreement between the Federal Government (*Bund*) and the Federal States (*Länder*), so that those rescued from distress at sea can be directly received upon disembarkation by municipalities and communities that are willing to take them in. The distribution should be regulated by an additional distribution coefficient that is to be agreed upon and is to supplement the *Königstein* allocation of funds formula.

The municipalities and communities demand from the Federal Government and the Federal Minister of the Interior that additional refugees must be considered equal to other refugees in legal and financial terms. Those rescued from distress at sea must be allowed access to fair and due process of law asylum procedures.

Potsdam, 3 June 2019
The Safe Haven Cities

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