

An die
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Dear Fathers and Brothers of the Society of Jesus,

On behalf of Federal Minister Karin Kneissl I thank you for your letter dated 31 July 2018, in which you outline a series of proposals concerning the issue of irregular migration from Africa.

The Austrian Government is committed to reducing the root causes that drive people to leave their country. These root causes are, inter alia, poverty, lack of economic perspectives, lack of effective and accountable institutions, shortcomings with regard to the rule of law and equal participation of women in political life.

Therefore, the Austrian Development Cooperation aims at tackling the root causes and offering opportunities to people in their countries of origin. In this context, Austria supports projects focusing on sustainable economic development, as well as institution and capacity building. The upcoming High Level Forum Africa Europe in Vienna on 18 December will provide the opportunity to have an in depth discussion on closer cooperation between the two continents to improve the economic, social and environmental exchanges which go far beyond the traditional development cooperation.

Austria's development cooperation is part of the development-policy activities of the European Union, the world's largest provider of development and humanitarian assistance. In 2017, the EU provided more than 2 billion euros for assistance to refugees, internally displaced people as well as to the communities hosting them. Austria contributes financially to these programmes. In addition, Austria is a donor to the EU Trust fund for Syria, known as the "MADAD" Fund (up to date 13.5 million euros), to the EU-Turkey Refugee Facility (45.6 million euros from 2016 to 2019) as well as to the EU Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa (7 million euros).

Reducing the root causes and creating opportunities in the countries of origin is a key objective of EU development-policy activities. Austria, of course, is striving to move forward this goal also during its EU Presidency.

As you pointed out, the issue of migration is also to be seen in the larger context of the global economy and international trade, including international cooperation to tax matters. I can assure you that Austria, in these areas is actively contributing in the relevant international organizations and fora and endeavours to advance fair and development-oriented solutions. As an example, I would like to mention that the Austrian Development Agency works with the African Tax Administration Forum in order to help building up efficient tax collection and audit institutions.

I would like to recall that Austria continues to live up to its humanitarian tradition in welcoming refugees under the Geneva Convention; since 2015 more than 89,000 people have been granted protection or allowed to stay in Austria on humanitarian grounds.

I hope this information is useful to you.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Schweitzer'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ambassador Désirée Schweitzer
Director General for Development Cooperation