



CONFERENCE

18TH – 19TH JUNE 2019
BERLIN



SPEECH BY FOREIGN MINISTER HEIKO MAAS AT THE CONFERENCE “THE OTHER 1 PERCENT” TO MARK WORLD REFUGEE DAY

Let's think back in time – 86 years to be precise, to 1933. That was the year that Albert Einstein had to leave Germany. He surrendered his passport and lived from then on in the United States. At that time, Albert Einstein was 54 years old and probably the most famous physicist in the world. The professors at Princeton welcomed him, the refugee, with open arms.

What would have happened if Albert Einstein had been your age – the age of most of you here today? Would he have even managed to flee? Would he have had to eke out a living with odd jobs? Would he have been welcomed with open arms?

Perhaps he would never have been able to research the Theory of Everything.

Ladies and gentlemen,
Scholarship holders,

Whether an individual can develop their potential is often a matter of pure chance.

By fleeing their countries, far too many young people lose their opportunity to learn the very skills they need for a self-determined life.

There are many different reasons for this but it's mainly because too often they have to focus on sheer survival while fleeing and sometimes afterwards, too. At any rate, a university education remains an unattainable goal for the vast majority of them.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We probably won't be able to rule out pure chance in future. However, we can at least increase the likelihood of more people being able to realise their full potential.

And that's exactly what we're doing with the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative – DAFI. We're granting young people access to education – beyond economic, political and social borders. And we're doing it in the countries of first admission.

For there in particular, young people need prospects, which basically means a fresh start. The prospect of a self-determined life. The prospect of being regarded as a human being rather than part of a supposedly menacing horde of “refugees”, as too often happens in our public sphere.



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Ms Vuni,

You experienced this development and you've also described it. You've described how you fled from South Sudan to Kenya. And how a DAFI scholarship enabled you to make a fresh start there. Thanks to this scholarship and the support of UNHCR, you became a member of the delegation of refugees which participated in the peace negotiations in your home country. You, those who had fled, lent your voice to the other refugees during the negotiations. And you thus helped to ensure that they were perceived for what they are: individuals.

A scholarship can change a life – and not only that of the recipient. That's the reason why what we're doing goes far beyond the fate of individuals.

Abdoul Kadir Bello Mamadou's story illustrates that. You're also here today – welcome! You fled from the Central African Republic to Chad and studied commercial law there. Despite all the difficulties you faced as a refugee!

After completing your studies, you worked at a business centre which helps other young people to enter the labour market. Here, too, we can see that it's not only about the individual but what the individual can do for others.

What a great way of providing the support that you once received yourself.

I could continue and tell the audience about each and every one of your biographies. For each one of them really is worth telling. We certainly wouldn't get bored. For your experiences are often material for books or novels: the many obstacles you had to overcome. The loss of your home. The fresh start in a foreign country.

I would like to say to all of you here today: I believe I speak on behalf of everyone here at the Federal Foreign Office when I say that we have the greatest respect for what you have achieved under such difficult circumstances!

You represent the more than 15,500 refugees whom, thanks to DAFI, we have helped to study since 1992. Last year alone, more than 6800 recipients in 51 countries were granted scholarships – a record number. In many ways, DAFI is thus the largest German university abroad!



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Ladies and gentlemen,

15,500 individuals is an impressive figure. 15,500 individuals who have received tangible assistance. However, it is far too few given the millions of refugees around the world who don't get the same or similar opportunities.

That's why we have increased our support for the DAFI programme fourfold in recent years and raised the total this year to 16.2 million euros.

And that's why we would like to broaden the DAFI programme and open it up to other donors. During the last few months, we've already spoken to other like-minded states and I hope that our plan will succeed. I'm delighted that the representatives of these countries are here today, for example Canada and New Zealand.

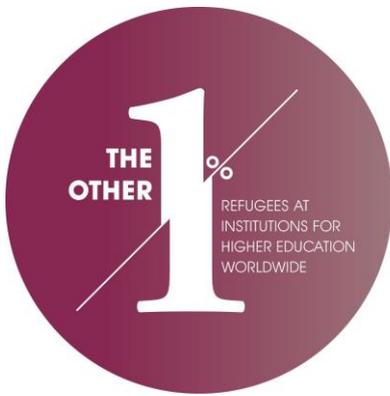
Let's take this opportunity to develop this great project further in cooperation with UNHCR. It's worth the effort.

For the DAFI programme, as well as the programmes of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and many other organisations and initiatives present here today are making a quite direct contribution towards one of the key goals of the Global Compact on Refugees: education! By creating training opportunities on the ground, we're supporting refugees – and also countries of first admission. And when they return home one day, hopefully also their home countries.

We all still recall the voices of the populists who used the Global Compacts for Migration and on Refugees to stir up fear and hate, also here in Germany. We can say to them now: look at these scholarship holders here today and look at their potential.

I'm also saying this in response to the voices which find a receptive audience time and again here in Germany. Let's turn back to Albert Einstein, who found a new home 86 years ago. Hundreds of thousands of other Germans also fled the horrors of the National Socialists. Many of them survived because other countries took them in. Ensuring that no-one in this country forgets this is part of Germany's national ethos. And indeed, we haven't forgotten.

I'm very pleased that today we're in a position to help refugees – whether by taking them in or by providing help on the ground.



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Ladies and gentlemen,

It's ultimately up to us to continue making sure that the Global Compact on Refugees is more than a piece of paper – that it's put into effect and that it improves the lives of refugees. This is our task.

I'm therefore especially delighted, Filippo, that you will be opening the first Global Refugee Forum in Geneva this December. There we intend to take stock for the first time and agree on further steps on how the Global Compact on Refugees can be implemented.

Our conference today and tomorrow will contribute to this by bringing together universities, scholarship holders, government representatives, the private sector and refugee organisations from all over the world. Its very title highlights the potential which we're currently not using: 36 percent of all young people worldwide are students. Among young refugees, however, it's only 1 percent – the other 1 percent.

I cannot even begin to imagine how many talented young people there are among the remaining 99 percent, how much potential there is which just has to be nurtured. Especially as we have to assume that people fleeing from persecution, war and violence will remain a global challenge for a long time to come. You just have to look around the world at the moment. That will almost certainly be very clear again, Filippo, when you announce the annual number of refugees and displaced persons tomorrow.

The number of arrivals may have fallen sharply in Germany. But the picture around the world is very different. An individual is forced to flee almost every two seconds. Countries such as Uganda, Colombia or Bangladesh experience this on a daily basis. And in Jordan, Foreign Minister Safadi told me just a few days ago how important international support is for the hundreds of thousands of refugees in that country.

Ladies and gentlemen,

These statistics are all about individuals. Some of them are here today. By the way, you can learn more about their impressive stories in an exhibition in the Federal Foreign Office Atrium after the conference. I cordially invite you to have a look.

The abstract term "refugee" has a face there.

Scholarships have given some a chance to summon up the courage to seize this opportunity and write about their own lives.

I hope that many more such stories will be written. For each and every one of these individuals is a real asset: not only for their friends and families; not only for the host countries – But for us all.

Thank you for joining us today! Welcome to the Federal Foreign Office, welcome to Berlin!