Speech by Tanja Gönner, Chair of the GIZ Management Board, at the 2016 annual press conference

**Generating prospects – more support for refugees**

Good morning, State Secretary Kitschelt,

Good morning, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I too would like to welcome you to GIZ’s annual press conference.

We have just seen some people who can look to the future with greater confidence. That makes me happy. Because what is most important is that we improve people’s prospects for a better life. This is what matters most to us, this is our task – we generate prospects. The situation facing refugees is very worrying. But it is good to know that we can provide effective support in many areas.

Our services are in demand. And this is reflected in our business figures for 2015. Last year’s business volume of EUR 2.1 billion is our largest ever and represents an increase of EUR 110 million compared with 2014. This illustrates the importance of our work. And as a professional service provider for the entire German Government, we expect this figure to rise again this year.

Refugee movements and migration currently play a big role in our activities. We are working at four levels: we want to support refugees, we want to stabilise the host regions, we want to improve living conditions in people’s home countries, and we want to support internally displaced persons and returnees. Our activities focus on enhancing people’s prospects. And in order to ensure that this leads to a future worth living, we must start shaping the future today.

We know from talking to people in crisis regions that they want to stay close to their home country. In a place where people speak their language and the culture is similar. Somewhere that allows them to return home quickly. But for this to be possible, they need prospects. They need accommodation and work, and they need education opportunities for their children. If parents see that their children do not have any prospects, they will seek refuge further away.

Germany has boosted the funds available to help refugees. And the EU is planning further activities to support people. There is now greater demand for our services. Since last year, we have received commissions totalling EUR 587 million. We have seen strong growth in this area, particularly this year. In 2015, the value of our ongoing commissions to help refugees was EUR 179 million; in the first six months of this year, we received EUR 408 million in funding for projects we will implement by 2018. Our main commissioning party here is the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). Our work focuses on the countries bordering Syria – we are generating prospects in northern Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey.

We want to support refugees. And this is exactly what we are doing on behalf of BMZ by providing over 30,000 cash-for-work jobs in northern Iraq, Jordan and Turkey this year. As we have just seen in the film from Jordan, this programme enables refugees to help themselves and others by putting up tents, digging sewage channels and organising the disposal of waste. In this way, people can earn extra income, which also benefits their families. Overall, we reach some 150,000 people with this programme.

We want to stabilise the host regions. This involves providing health care and education for host communities and those who have fled the terror inflicted by the so-called Islamic State. In northern Iraq there are 2.1 million internally displaced persons, including many Yazidis, and 200,000 Syrian refugees. With our support, 250,000 people there now have access to health care and 200,000 people have an opportunity to learn to read and write or take part in training courses in newly built community centres. These services are available to both refugees and Iraqi citizens, because, in order to guarantee social peace, both sides must benefit.

More than half the refugees around the world are children or young people. They need particular support from us as they are often traumatised. To help them, we are developing education and care services. In northern Iraq, we are building 10 schools for 70,000 children, who also receive psychosocial care in the community centres. On our behalf, UNICEF organises football tournaments, theatre workshops and readings to give children something to do that takes them out of their day-to-day lives. In Turkey, we are also working on behalf of BMZ to improve care and education services for children and young people. Good care and, above all, a good education provide the foundation for a good future. They generate prospects.

We want to improve living conditions and in doing so tackle the root causes of displacement. In Afghanistan, one of the largest source countries of refugees, we are working on behalf of BMZ to reform the vocational education and training system. With 50 pilot schools now established, training opportunities are opening up, 19,000 young people are benefiting from new training programmes, and 10,000 teachers have received further training.

In North Africa, we are also assisting the German Government in promoting employment for young people in particular. As you saw in the film, GIZ has helped give over 1,700 youths in Tunisia a chance to start a career. Although it may take time for this initiative to achieve a visible impact, this investment in structural improvements is absolutely essential. We can only tackle the root causes of displacement by improving living conditions.

With our help, 100,000 young people around the world receive training every year. This also generates prospects.

And we want to support internally displaced persons and returnees. Being a refugee in your own country is a difficult situation. This is one of the issues affecting Afghanistan, as we saw in the film earlier. Around 1 million people have been displaced within the country. On behalf of the Federal Foreign Office we have helped 40,000 people by providing temporary accommodation or materials to build new homes. They are also learning to read and write and are receiving technical training so they can earn a living.

All this shows that the global challenges of our time are increasing. This is also reflected in our work, which itself is becoming more challenging. More than half the countries in which GIZ works are fragile states – and this figure is set to rise. These states are beset by crises or are directly threatened by conflict. But in spite of these difficult conditions, we are still able to achieve results.

Of course, supporting refugees and migrants is just one part of what we do. Giving people prospects – this goal guides us in all areas of our work. Refugee and climate programmes are, however, currently GIZ’s biggest areas of activity.

Take climate change. The Climate Change Conference last year sent a strong signal with the commitment to keeping global warming well under two degrees Celsius for the rest of the century. Now the world needs to put this into practice. A third of our projects are already supporting countries affected by climate change. Viet Nam, where the coastline in the Mekong Delta is being eroded by increasingly violent storms and flooding, is one example. With our help, in some places up to 180 metres of land has been reclaimed from the sea. At the same time, we have provided advice on using less water and fewer pesticides when growing rice, which is the most important staple food in the world. As a result, the built up coastal strips now protect the rice fields, which are able to produce a higher yield of better quality rice. Overall, this has secured the livelihoods of 7 million people in the region.

As I mentioned at the beginning, last year our business volume reached a record level of over EUR 2.1 billion. Our main commissioning party, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), asked us to carry out EUR 1.7 billion worth of projects last year (business volume). This includes EUR 236 million from third parties such as the European Commission, foreign governments and foundations, which cofinanced projects alongside BMZ. GIZ is a service provider for the whole German Government. The volume of commissions from other federal ministries rose to EUR 250 million in 2015 – up EUR 11 million from the previous year (2014: EUR 239 million). GIZ International Services, which supports the German Government’s international cooperation activities without drawing on German tax revenue, also increased its total business volume in 2015 to around EUR 166 million (up 9 per cent from EUR 152 million in 2014).

As a service provider for the German Government, we are well equipped to offer policy-makers effective support in key areas of activity. The 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals will significantly shape GIZ’s work in the years to come. These goals will guide us in all the projects we are involved in around the world and enable us to provide the German Government with effective support in implementing the Agenda in developing countries, emerging economies and industrialised nations alike.

Everything we achieve, we achieve with our staff. As at 31 December 2015, GIZ had a total of 17,319 staff members (compared with 16,410 on 31 December 2014) – more than ever before. Some 70 per cent of these – 11,949 people altogether (11,260 in 2014) – were local personnel. In addition, 730 development workers carried out activities for GIZ last year. Through their outstanding commitment, proven expertise and creativity they identify solutions to new and complex problems time and time again. And they do this under often extremely difficult circumstances. GIZ’s success would not be possible without our staff, and I would like to thank them for their hard work and commitment.