ANDREW MARR:  
Now then, the scenes of chaos along Europe’s southern and eastern borders go on, but EU leaders have been confused and contradictory in their response – opening borders one day, slamming them shut the next. This week they’re going to try to agree a common line, but with Germany demanding that each country takes its fair share of migrants and Hungary putting up more razor wire to keep them out, it’s hard to see what the deal will be. Britain has opted out of that, of course, but should we be doing more to help solve this crisis? I’m joined now by the International Development Secretary Justine Greening. Good morning.

JUSTINE GREENING:  
Good morning, Andrew.

ANDREW MARR:  
I have to ask you, why are we going to be part of this conference in Europe next week given that we are no longer part of the Schengen … we’re not part of the Schengen group; we’re not going to take our quota, as it were, as the Germans want? What are
we doing there in the first place?

JUSTINE GREENING:
Well we are one of the lead countries that’s been helping refugees in the region in Syria. No country other than the US has done more. We’re also though part of this broader European effort. We have been out …

ANDREW MARR:
Not really, are we?

JUSTINE GREENING:
Yes we have been. We’ve had HMS Enterprise, HMS Bulwark out in the Mediterranean saving lives. We’ve been part of the coordinated effort to tackle people smuggling. And also we’re part of many of the discussions and work that’s now under way to work with countries of transit and countries of origin to try and tackle this issue more at the root causes of it.

ANDREW MARR:
We’ve been watching these extraordinary scenes all week of the razor wire going up and the riot police pushing back refugees on the borders of Hungary. Do you have some sympathy with the Hungarian government?

JUSTINE GREENING:
Well I think what it shows is why the approach we’re taking is a sensible one because we’re going to play our part in helping …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) We don’t have that border of course. It’s easy for us by comparison.

JUSTINE GREENING:
Well we’re going to play our part in helping to resettle up to 20,000 refugees over the next few years, but we’re going to do that in a safe way that means people don’t need to put their lives in the hands of a people smuggler. We’ll be taking people directly from the region, but also focusing on particularly helping the most vulnerable people
who’ve been caught up in this crisis who agencies like the UNHCR have particularly identified as needing to be taken out of that region so that they can rebuild their lives.

ANDREW MARR:
Okay. So to be clear, if next week the German government says to us would you take some kind of quota of those people already inside the EU, the Schengen group, our answer will still be no?

JUSTINE GREENING:
We’re not going to be part of a quota system. We think that the approach that we’re taking is the right one, which is to help people in the region and continue to play a leading role there to make sure people have got the shelter, the water, the food, the medical support that they need, the education for their children; but at the same time, when we do need to see people relocated to restart their lives elsewhere, to do that in a thoughtful, measured, sensible way that’s safe for them and means they don’t have to put their lives and indeed possibly their life savings into the hands of a criminal.

ANDREW MARR:
Now the first people I read are coming next week from these Syrian camps. Do you know how many people are coming and where they’re going to go and how they’re going to be looked after?

JUSTINE GREENING:
Well we don’t have the exact numbers yet …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) Rough numbers?

JUSTINE GREENING:
… in terms of how many people will be coming next week. We’ve set up a taskforce that works across not just three government departments – principally Home office and Communities and Local Government, also DFID - but also includes the Local Government Association too.
ANDREW MARR:
So …

JUSTINE GREENING:
If I could just finish, Andrew. So that means that we are working in one team together. On top of that, the Prime Minister’s also announced a new ministerial post – Richard Harrington who will be leading this overall work to make sure that this resettlement process happens in a sensible way that means we get vulnerable people who want to resettle but also that we’re working with local authorities – and I’d like to thank those local authorities who’ve been working with us so hard – to make sure that when they get refugees into their communities, they’re well prepared to manage that.

ANDREW MARR:
So I asked you how many people were going to come in and you said you couldn’t give an exact number. Can you give me a very rough idea?

JUSTINE GREENING:
I’m not … I can’t give you any …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) You’ve no idea how many people are coming in next week?

JUSTINE GREENING:
I’m not go… I’m not going to …

ANDREW MARR:
Isn’t that rather extraordinary? I mean given …

JUSTINE GREENING:
Not really, Andrew.

ANDREW MARR:
Well it’s happening next week. I mean presumably arrangements have to be made to
receive them and find homes for them, accommodate them, feed them, educate them if they’re children and so forth. If you don’t know how many people are coming in, how are we going to do this?

JUSTINE GREENING:
Well we are going to be bringing the first tranche of people over next week. I’m not going to on your show give you the precise numbers, but …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) I didn’t ask. Just a very rough idea was all I was asking for.

JUSTINE GREENING:
I’m not … I’m not going to give you the numbers, but we are well coordinated across government and also working with the Local Government Association. This will be the first group of people. We’ve said we’ll take up to 20,000. I think the most important thing for us to work on has been to ensure that we are working with the UNHCR, but also working with local authorities here in the UK …

ANDREW MARR:
Alright.

JUSTINE GREENING:
… to do this proposal in a sensible way that will not only be help to the refugees we’re trying to help, but also will be manageable for local authorities.

ANDREW MARR:
So people watching at this stage don’t know whether 3 people are coming or 3,000 people are coming next week. Nevertheless, a lot of people will think that it can’t just be government and local authorities; individuals ought to help as well. Yvette Cooper said that she was going to take some people in. The Archbishop of Canterbury is taking people into Lambeth Palace. I don’t know if the Greening household are going to take people in or if your message is to people who have got spare space whether they should think about taking Syrian refugees into their house. What’s your message?
JUSTINE GREENING:
Well I’ve always been amazed at the generosity of British people whether it’s responding to the typhoon in the Philippines, the earthquake in Nepal or indeed people’s incredible response to seeing the plight of Syrian refugees and offering them homes. Local authorities will be working with groups on the ground who are offering support. We’re also trying to play our role in government coordinating that too. So I know many people have come forward to charities with support. That’s incredibly welcome. In the end what we need to do is make sure we work through local authorities. And also we should recognise that many of the people (in particular children) that might be arriving in the UK will have been through some terrible, terrible circumstances, so we have to make sure we’ve got the right …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) Specialist.

JUSTINE GREENING:
… specialist support there to help them rebuild their lives.

ANDREW MARR:
(over) Alright. Now you were Transport Secretary. You were involved in the Transport department for a long time, so I therefore have to ask you about Jeremy Corbyn’s first big policy announcement, which is the line by line renationalisation of the railway system – which for a lot of people (we see from the polls but also here) is very, very popular.

JUSTINE GREENING:
Well we’ve got record numbers of passengers on our railways at the moment. We’ve got record investment going in. In fact we’ve never had more investment. This is the biggest investment going on since the Victorians built the network. We’re thinking ahead and bringing forward our plans on High Speed 2, so we’ve not just got the right capacity today, we’ve got the right capacity for the future. There’s been far too long in Britain when our railways just didn’t have the investment that they need.
ANDREW MARR:  
So is your basic complaint about renationalisation that it wouldn’t allow sufficient investment in for the next phase of the railway system? Is that what you mean?

JUSTINE GREENING:  
(over) I think it would waste millions, potentially billions of taxpayers’ money on what is essentially from the Labour Party now an ideological joyride, at a time when instead we should be getting on with the plan we’ve got in place, the record investment to do the kind of capacity that commuters need, the sorts of improvements on the track, on the signalling that are vital to help people be able to get to work. And when we talk about Labour putting at risk our country’s economic security …

ANDREW MARR:  
Well …

JUSTINE GREENING:  
… and the family security and their finances, this is precisely what we mean. Having a railway network that has the right level of investment is hugely important for Britain’s economy. It’s massively important for constituents like my own who rely on the railways to be able to get to work and that’s why we should never let them get …

ANDREW MARR:  
Okay.

JUSTINE GREENING:  
… the keys of that car again.

ANDREW MARR:  
Justine Greening, thank you very much indeed for joining us.

JUSTINE GREENING:  
Thank you.

INTERVIEW ENDS