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Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Program General Debate

Statement by the Government of Canada Delivered by Mr. Fraser Valentine

Assistant Deputy Minister
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to the
70th SESSION
of the
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
OF THE UNITED NATIONS
HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

Geneva, 7 – 11 October 2019

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Comité Exécutif du Haut-Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les Réfugiés Énoncé général

Déclaration du Gouvernement du Canada Prononcée par M. Fraser Valentine

Sous-ministre adjoint
Immigration, Réfugiés et Citoyenneté Canada

À la 70^{ième} SESSION
du
COMITÉ EXÉCUTIF
DU HAUT COMMISSARIAT DES
NATIONS UNIES POUR LES RÉFUGIÉS

Genève, 7 – 11 octobre 2019

70th Session of the UNHCR Executive Committee (2019)

Government of Canada:

General Statement

Chair, High Commissioner Grandi, distinguished delegates, it is a great honour to address you today.

In our statement today, we would like to highlight three areas where we believe international solidarity is needed more than ever: solidarity with UNHCR, solidarity with host states, and solidarity with refugees and other persons of concern.

First, we the international community continue to commend the work of the UNHCR. UNHCR staff and implementing partners continue to provide protection and life-saving assistance around the world despite numerous challenges: worsening crises, growing needs, and persistent funding shortfalls. Your steadfast commitment to persons in need of this protection, is not lost on us.

Canada is a major donor to UNHCR. As such, we provide timely, multi-year and unearmarked institutional funding to UNHCR. We aim to provide UNHCR quality funding to support the efficient provision of timely life-saving assistance to refugees and to other persons of concern.

Chair, we call for continued solidarity with UNHCR not simply because of the Agency's tireless work, but because it does so while we call upon it to do ever more.

As we prepare for the first Global Refugee Forum in December 2019, we thank UNHCR for laying the necessary groundwork to ensure the success of this event.

We reiterate our support for this process, and commend the efforts of the High Commissioner in preparing for the Forum.

For our part, Canada will support the meaningful implementation of the Compact by co-sponsoring the durable solutions area of focus, and will actively participate in the Forum itself.

Canada would also like to underline the importance of a whole-of-society approach to comprehensive refugee responses. We believe in working together with civil society and other relevant stakeholders to achieve the best outcomes for refugees.

Second, we call on member states to further demonstrate solidarity with host states, including through more equitable and predictable responsibility sharing. More than ever, the only way we can tackle the increasingly complex humanitarian crises facing our global community is by working together.

As we know, developing regions host **more than 80 percent** of the global refugee population. We recognize the long and generous history of hosting states, as well as the challenges and stresses on local communities that this can create. We commend this continued leadership and hospitality.

Canada is engaging with partners to address refugee crises, thus laying the foundation for substantial and ongoing progress in response to refugee situations, including responsibility sharing as outlined in the Global Compact on Refugees.

To do our part, Canada is proud to have admitted the largest number of resettled refugees in 2018. Our sincere hope is that this inaugural Forum will encourage new and traditional actors to increase spaces for both traditional resettlement and for complementary pathways.

Moreover, we view the High-Level Segment on Statelessness as an important opportunity to show support for the #IBelong Campaign, and to strengthen protection for stateless people. In this regard, as a member of the 'Group of Friends' to the campaign, we are supportive of the Group's statement reaffirming both UNHCR's and the international community's collective efforts to end statelessness by 2024.

Third, we believe that renewed solidarity with refugees, particularly those with heightened vulnerabilities, is essential.

We must not forget that this is why we are here. It is our collective responsibility to meet the specific needs and priorities of those who are forced to flee. They need not rhetoric, but real change, and meaningful, measurable actions.

Solidarity with refugees also includes ensuring their active participation in decisions that affect their lives. Canada whole-heartedly embraces increased refugee participation. We continue to support the inclusion of refugee voices, and commend UNHCR's efforts to embrace this principle in the Global Refugee Forum.

Chair, in closing, let me reiterate Canada's support for a successful Global Refugee Forum and for the High Commissioner's tireless efforts to assist and protect refugees. We stand with you.

Thank you.