

**Permanent Mission of India
Geneva**

Statement by India at the General Debate of the 70th Annual Session of the Executive Committee (ExCom) of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) programme – Delivered by Dr. Sadre Alam, First Secretary (Geneva, Switzerland, 9 October, 2019)

Mr. Chairperson, Mr. High Commissioner, excellences and distinguished delegates,

My delegation takes this opportunity to congratulate you Mr. Chair (*H.E. Ambassador Boudjemâa Delmi (Algeria)*) for very ably guiding our work since assumption of the office in 2018 and presiding over this annual session of the Executive Committee (ExCom). We thank the Deputy Secretary General *Ms. Amina Mohammed* for her useful opening remarks, providing the broader perspective of Agenda 2030, the UN funding compact and ongoing development system reforms among others to the U.N. led response to the cross-cutting issue of forced displacement and thank the High Commissioner *Mr. Filippo Grandi* for his comprehensive and forward looking statement.

Mr. Chair,

2. It is concerning that an estimated 13.6 million people became newly displaced during the year 2018 with the total number doubling in the last 20 years and that the total number of ‘persons of concern’ is expected to further increase by approximately 5.6 million people (7.5 per cent) by 2021. The growth in these numbers unfortunately continues to outpace the rate at which solutions are being found.

3. More than 4/5th of these are hosted in low and middle income countries and close to conflict situations. A large number of them remain in protracted situations and only a very small proportion are able to return or be resettled. Further, while a sixth of the ‘persons of concern’ are hosted in our region not even a tenth of the total UNHCR budget is allocated to it. This is testimony to the fact that most of the burden is inequitably being borne by these countries themselves.

Mr. Chair,

4. The High-Level Segment and its distinguished panelists have helped put a spotlight on the ‘invisible’ and added voice to the ‘voiceless’ at a critical point in the collective journey of envisioning and realising a world free of statelessness.

5. The recent affirmation of the Global Compact on Refugees as a voluntary, apolitical, non-prescriptive and cooperative action oriented framework for an effective and meaningful burden and responsibility sharing in the spirit of global solidarity and

premised on national ownership is a milestone step in the right direction. The implementation of the commitments made therein and its follow-up and review should be in keeping with this spirit and consistent with the respective obligations of Member States under international refugee law. The First Global Refugee Forum later this year is an opportunity to operationalise the compact for enhancing the momentum of ongoing international efforts by changing the ‘business as usual’ approach in order to genuinely unburden the host countries through equitable sharing of responsibility.

Mr. Chair,

6. We take positive note of UNHCR’s internal organizational transformation process implemented around eight pillars and its delegation and decentralization to bring its closer to the ground and areas of action. We wish to underline that all such efforts should result in a more agile, effective and efficient results oriented office fully governed by and accountable to the Member States.

7. UNHCR also needs to continuously prioritize its activities to fulfill its core mandate and to find durable and permanent solutions to the growing refugee problem. All efforts to ensure the protection of the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) through any multi-stakeholder plan of action facilitated by UNHCR should be with the consent of States, aim at complementing their efforts and be fully aligned with their policies and priorities.

8. We request UNHCR to continue to help build, strengthen and use national capacities for protection and humanitarian action and increasingly work with local responders for ensuring localization of solutions and ownership of the process.

9. One cannot also overemphasize the need for un-earmarked longer term sustained funding and a fully funded UNHCR to meet the global needs in the hosting countries. We urge the international stakeholders to provide such support and resource to ensure greater flexibility, predictability and continuity in humanitarian response.

Mr. Chair,

10. A number of States, not parties to the international refugee instruments, have shown a generous approach to hosting refugees. India is one of them with a continuing long tradition of playing a host to a large number of refugees despite our own developmental and security related challenges. We continue to host them, entirely, using our own resources. Needless to add that India is not a source of refugees and we take this opportunity to renew India's commitment to the UNHCR in fulfilling its mandate and look forward to productive outcomes through constructive engagement during this 70th session of the ExCom.

Thank you.