

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
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Programme

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General Debate

DRAFT STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF IRELAND

Cormac Gallagher, Deputy Director, Humanitarian Unit

Distinguished Chair, High Commissioner, Excellencies, Colleagues and Friends,

Ireland aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union and adds the following in its national capacity.

We would like to echo the sentiments expressed by others in commending the unwavering dedication demonstrated by the High Commissioner and all UNHCR staff in implementing the mandate assigned to them. In particular, we wish to acknowledge those UNHCR staff who undertake this work in dangerous environments.

Even a brief survey of the world today confirms the scale and complexity of the challenges facing UNHCR, and this is reflected clearly in the Biennial programme budget. When discussing the sheer scale of the statistics, it is incumbent upon us to remain aware of the everyday realities of what they represent: disruption, upheaval and destitution of the lives of millions of individuals by circumstances beyond their control.

It is especially important in this context that we challenge narratives and discourse which either wilfully or otherwise, serve to demean and dehumanise this extremely vulnerable group of persons.

In the context of these challenges, we commend the reform efforts undertaken by UNHCR in increasing its operational efficiency and adapting to the ever-shifting environment. Its ambitious decentralisation plans are just the latest demonstration of its commitment in this regard.

Of course, UNHCR does not stand alone in confronting these challenges. As the needs grow, so must our collective commitment to addressing them, by better and more equitably sharing burden and responsibility. Accordingly, Ireland strongly endorses the Global Compact on Refugees and in turn looks forward to the Global Refugee Forum this December.

Chair,

We recognise the importance of leading in the first instance through our actions. Earlier this year, we launched *A Better World*, Ireland's new policy for international development, in which the Government reaffirmed support for upholding the multilateral framework for protection of refugees.

We were also delighted to welcome the High Commissioner to Dublin in July. Ireland has worked to increase funding to UNHCR over the past five years, including a further increase in core funding this year, while continuing to provide assistance in areas of particular need, such as Syria.

We are also committed to providing practical assistance. In 2015 we launched the Irish Refugee Protection Programme which to date has welcomed over 2,600 refugees to Ireland with more due to arrive in the coming weeks. In response to the UNHCR/European Commission pledging exercise Ireland has pledged 900 resettlement places for 2020 – 750 for Syrian refugees hosted in Jordan and Lebanon and 150 for Eritrean refugees hosted in Ethiopia.

Ireland strongly supports the principle of solidarity and we have responded consistently to calls for pledges to relocate migrants following search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean.

Last year, we were pleased to share with the ExCom that Ireland had announced the development of a community-based refugee sponsorship programme. Recently, refugees coming from Jordan and Lebanon were offered the opportunity to be supported on arrival under that model, which seeks to enable groups within a community to come together to support refugees arriving in Ireland. A pilot programme began in December and will run until the end of this month with further expansion expected.

Chair,

Ireland welcomes the focus this week on statelessness through the high-level segment and the #IBelong campaign. We welcome the advocacy of UNHCR on statelessness and its support to Member States on the implementation of the Global Action Plan to End Statelessness, and look forward to continuing to engage with you on this issue.

Chair,

In 2016, we were proud, alongside Jordan, to facilitate the negotiation of the New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants, the first time that all 193 Member States of the UN came together to comprehensively address the global challenges faced by refugees. We now look forward to reassembling in this hall in December for the inaugural Global Refugee Forum, which is an opportunity to advance strengthened cooperation and solidarity with refugees and host countries and advance the Global Compact. Ireland would like to thank the co-hosts and co-convenors for their leadership in preparing the ground for the Forum.

In conclusion, Ireland remains as committed as ever to supporting and advocating for the indispensable role of multilateralism, and the United Nations in particular, in addressing and resolving our shared challenges.

Thank you.