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**Statement of Lebanon at the
ExCom 70th session**

**Delivered by H.E Salim BADDOURA
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Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, allow me to congratulate you on your excellent stewardship, and to commend the Deputy Secretary General Ms. Amina Mohamad for her inspiring remarks and the opening address by the High Commissioner. We salute his energy and his team's dedication in Lebanon and elsewhere. We furthermore take note of his efforts to reshape the UNHCR in a way to countenance the current protection challenges, and we call on the international community to furnish the UNHCR with the necessary financial support to help it carry out fully its mandate.

Mr. Chairman,

Commenting on the high level general debate of the general assembly in New York, the Associated Press came up with the title "Dark skies: UN meeting reveals a world in a really bad mood"... Our planet is indeed plagued by a myriad of global challenges that feed on each other and don't bode well for the future of our peoples and societies. In such a fraught global environment, many refugee's crisis thrive and proliferate. In this regard, my country has the sad privilege of being in the eye of the storm since 2011, when the war erupted in Syria sparking a refugee influx of unprecedented magnitude and leaving the neighboring countries clueless.

Despite unpreparedness, limited resources and means, sluggish economic situation, small territory, the Lebanese people and government stood up to the humanitarian challenge, displayed admirable solidarity and provided shelter, protection and relief to our displaced neighbors. Since then, a frank and constructive dialogue has been ongoing with the UNHCR in order to clear any differences of interpretations regarding our respective obligations.

But now after 8 years, the well-documented pressures on our economy, infrastructure, society, environment, education and health sector have mounted to intolerable levels, and the international support, albeit commendable, is proving more and more insufficient. The crisis is of the sort that puts the identity and the survival of Lebanon at risk as pointed out by H.E the President of the Republic of Lebanon in his speech at the General Assembly last month. For us the status quo is not an option anymore.

Along with others we think that international efforts towards finding a political solution to the crisis in Syria should be paralleled by multifaceted efforts by UNHCR and other main players aimed at increasing the gradual return of displaced Syrians to their country in safety and dignity. Our views are warranted by the evolution of the situation on the ground during the last few years. Moreover it's clear by now that keeping on politicizing the issue and inhibiting return is not anymore in the interest of anybody and certainly not of the displaced Syrians themselves.

We look forward to a successful Global Refugee Forum; but to fully serve its purpose and fulfill the burden and responsibility sharing principle, the forum should provide a platform for creative ideas, new initiatives, serious pledges, towards durable solutions. And as far as Lebanon is concerned durable solution means total repatriation, because resettlement has proven anemic and integration could not be accepted or envisaged in the Lebanese context.

Mr. Chairman,

Coming to Statelessness: The government is still determined to address this issue head on.

Starting 2017, the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities adopted a series of measures to modernize the civil registration system, increase transparency, and address procedural gender inequalities.

Additionally, the Ministry issued key policies to facilitate the civil registration process of particular vulnerable groups, i.e Syrian refugees and Palestine Refugees from Syria

In March 2018, the Ministry of interior waived the requirements for late birth registration (i.e judicial process) for Syrian refugee and PRS children born in Lebanon between 1 January 2011 and 8 February 2018. The waiver was expanded for one year on 29/8/2019 to include children born in Lebanon between 1 January 2011 and 8 February 2019 a deadline which was later postponed by virtue of Council of Ministers Decision number 6 dated

29/8/2019 which has also requested UNHCR to require the stamp of the Department of Foreigners at the MOIM on any birth certificate of a Syrian newborn in Lebanon.

In 2018, UNHCR and DGCS agreed on fast-tracking the issuance of civil documentation to refugees who are planning to repatriate to Syria within the near future, and SOPs were developed accordingly in 2019.

These measures have led to significant progress specifically in the past three years with respect to two important steps in the birth registration progress: a) 12 percent increase in parents filing of applications with the registrations, and b) 13 percent finalizing the birth registration at the Foreigners' registry.

We don't plan to stop halfway and our efforts to reduce statelessness will be pursued. The digitalization of the civil registry records is for example envisaged.

We contemplate as well the possibility a law reform in order to streamline the birth registration process in a way to make it easier for parents and to further prevent statelessness.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.