

UNHCR Executive Committee

69th Session

General Debate

Statement by Ambassador Elisabeth Tichy-Fisslberger
Permanent Representative of Austria to the UN Office in Geneva

Austria aligns itself with the Statement on behalf of the EU and its Member States.

Madame Chair,

Let me first start by thanking Ms. Kristalina Georgieva for her interesting keynote address. I would also like to thank High Commissioner Filippo Grandi for his statement and his tireless efforts to protect and improve the lives of persons of concern to UNHCR. We equally thank all UNHCR's staff for their relentless dedication and work in often difficult and dangerous operation environments.

An historic process has started with the New York Declaration, including the application of the comprehensive refugee response framework in certain countries and leading into the global compact on refugees. The legally non-binding text as proposed by the High Commissioner is an important step forward to better respond to the contemporary challenges of large movements of refugees. The text also proves that effective multilateralism can lead to the establishment of a comprehensive and practical instrument. A multilateralism that is grounded in the fundamental principles of humanity and solidarity can thus bring real change to the lives of refugees. We would like to thank UNHCR once again for having led a very skillful, diligent and extremely transparent and inclusive consultation process on the GCR.

With more than 68 million people displaced worldwide, we remain confronted with unprecedented humanitarian challenges. Protracted crisis situations in Syria, South Sudan, Afghanistan and too many other countries and regions continue to cause massive displacement and large-scale refugee movements. In Rakhine State, renewed violence has forced more than 700.000 Rohingyas to flee Myanmar and seek safety in Bangladesh. The situation in North Africa remains highly complex, leading to new and protracted refugee situations as well as mixed movements by land and by sea. Especially in Libya, the political instability continues to affect the population and aggravates the

protection environment for refugees and asylum-seekers. The Austrian government has provided one million euros in order to support UNHCR's Libya operation.

Austria is still among those European States hosting one of the highest numbers of persons of concern to UNHCR. In addition to providing accommodation and basic care for asylum seekers in need, my government has considerably increased expenses on measures for integration such as language and orientation courses.

The year 2018 marks the twentieth anniversary of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. Considering that about 40 million people were displaced inside their own country, Austria welcomes the launch of a three-year multi-stakeholder Plan of Action to Advance Prevention, Protection and Solutions for IDPs, known as the GP20 Action plan. As an expression of our commitment and political support to this issue, we will participate in the Steering Group to be established in order to provide support for the implementation of the GP20 Plan of Action.

We welcome the appointment of a Senior Coordinator and UNHCR's efforts to prevent and respond to sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse. We also commend UNHCR on its clear position towards that topic and the transparency provided. This issue is of great importance for us. There is no place for sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse in UNHCR.

Finally, let me assure you High Commissioner that Austria will continue to be a strong partner of UNHCR and support your organization in your precious work.

Thank you very much.