

**United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees  
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**General Debate  
STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF ICELAND  
- *Check against delivery* -**

**H.E. Mr. Harald Aspelund  
Permanent Representative of Iceland to the United Nations, Geneva**

**Mr. Vice-Chair, Mr. High Commissioner,**

Let me begin by thanking the High Commissioner for his opening statement and valuable insights on the way forward. Iceland commends the High Commissioner and UNHCR staff for their unwavering commitment to protect and assist those forced to flee.

The past decade has seen the highest number of people forcibly displaced. Extreme poverty has risen for the first time in years and violence and armed conflict continue to put a heavy toll on civilians. Moreover, extreme weather events continue to exacerbate existing vulnerabilities, often triggering repeated forced displacement.

As highlighted in the recent report on Internal Displacement, internally displaced persons are all too often neglected, resulting in a vicious cycle of invisibility and lack of prioritisation. Iceland welcomes the report's concrete recommendations and solutions to this global crisis.

Mr. Vice Chair,

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a stark reminder of the importance of collective action. Iceland has from the onset advocated for COVID-19 vaccines for ALL, with emphasis on fair and equal access, as demonstrated by our dedicated support to COVAX-AMC. We recognise that refugees, IDPs and stateless persons remain disproportionately affected by the pandemic, and that special attention needs to be given to their inclusion in vaccination and health care responses.

The pandemic has also revealed the extent of gender inequalities, with a stark rise in gender-based violence globally. Women and girls in humanitarian settings are now 70% more likely to become victims of GBV. As steadfast advocates for gender equality, Iceland continues to emphasise a strong focus on women and girls across all UNHCR activities.

We also remain committed to supporting the rights of LGBTI+ persons, who face some of the greatest protection risks around the world, and who are often forced to seek refuge outside their country of origin for fear of persecution.

Mr. Vice Chair,

The complex humanitarian situation in Afghanistan remains alarming, in particular the situation of women and girls and that of LGBTI+ persons.

Iceland is committed to play its part. We recently provided urgent and flexible humanitarian funding to UNHCR to respond to the immediate needs of vulnerable Afghans, including those internally displaced.

In parallel, Iceland is ready to assist Afghan refugees and others who have clearly expressed their wish to leave Afghanistan following the Taliban takeover, focusing specifically on the most vulnerable. To that end, a formal government decision was announced in late August stating Iceland's intent to continue to work closely with partners to address this critical issue.

More broadly, Iceland will continue to partake in burden and responsibility sharing, both by hosting refugees and by supporting host communities. Our resettlement commitments for 2020 and 2021 stand, despite COVID-19 delays, and we will continue to work in close partnership with UNHCR in providing a durable solution to refugees.

Mr. Vice Chair,

Statelessness continues to be an issue worldwide with millions of people being denied a nationality, impacting their access to basic rights such as education, healthcare, employment, and freedom of movement. Iceland fully supports UNHCR's actions to end statelessness by 2024, as signalled by our recent accession to the UN Conventions on Statelessness.

Finally, we welcome the High-Level Officials Meeting in December to take stock of progress made and remaining challenges following the Global Refugee Forum.

I thank you.