



MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS
AND TRADE PROMOTION

**Address by the Hon. Carmelo Abela,
Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade Promotion of Malta,
at the Global Refugee Forum**

16-18 December 2019, Geneva

Mr President, Excellencies;

Malta's location along the central Mediterranean route has long put refugee issues on the national agenda. The route remains one of the most active and dangerous, being used by people fleeing persecution, conflict and violence, as well as those looking for better economic and social opportunities. Despite a significant decrease in arrivals in Europe through this route over the past two years, refugees and migrants continue to put themselves at grave risk, both on land and at sea, in their attempts to reach Europe. The applications for asylum received by Malta have increased by more than 58 per cent between 2018 and 2019.

Indeed, we must continue to work to find solutions to the challenges that this situation poses, and to provide the necessary protection to those who need it most. In this regard, Malta continues to support the UNHCR wholeheartedly in its work along the central Mediterranean route. My country has consistently contributed towards the UNHCR Supplementary Appeal for the Central Mediterranean Route Situation and is determined to continue doing so.

On a national level, Malta is implementing a national integration strategy which provides a framework whereby refugees and those provided international protection are given a greater sense of belonging to the society hosting them and reaffirms their access to sectors vital for their livelihood, including language skills, education, health, accommodation, and employment.

It is thus with great interest that we also followed the development of the Global Compact on Refugees. Challenges such as those faced by refugees and host communities demand international solutions. We welcomed the adoption of the Compact last year to give a new impetus to the protection of refugees in this regard and the pivotal role that the UNHCR continues to play in safeguarding their rights worldwide.

It is heartening to see the response to this first Global Refugee Forum as a reaffirmation of the international community's commitment towards strengthening its response to assist refugees and the countries that host them. I am proud to have submitted, on behalf of my Government, Malta's pledges, which target issues such as asylum, reception, refugee integration, and protection capacity, amongst others. In this regard, I am pleased to announce that, last week, Malta ratified the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons.

The challenges before us, nonetheless, remain significant. We look forward to taking them on together, under the able guidance of the UNHCR.

Thank you.