

**71st Session of the UNHCR Executive Committee,
October 5-10 2020, Geneva**

Statement by the Government of Finland

Delivered by Ms. Kirsti Kauppi, Permanent Representative of Finland, Geneva

Mr Chair, High Commissioner, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Finland aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

Year 2020 has brought us the largest international and humanitarian crisis in 50 years. Needs have skyrocketed and funding is lagging behind. We salute the UNHCR, its staff and partners globally for enduring the difficult months behind us and for their dedication and commitment to their work. The pandemic has highlighted once again also the remarkable contribution of host countries and communities all around the world.

The global resettlement needs continue to grow while the opportunities offered for refugees remain inadequate. The COVID-19 pandemic has placed significant challenges to resettlement operations. Finland remains committed to the implementation of the Three-Year Strategy on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways and we have looked into alternative ways of working to be able to welcome 850 refugees in line with our pledge given at the first Global Refugee Forum. The Finnish Municipalities have remained committed to receiving refugees and we are pleased to further scale up our resettlement programme to welcome 1 050 refugees next year. Furthermore, civil society plays an active role in

integrating and welcoming refugees. This multistakeholder approach, including also community volunteers, is central and it can be considered as best practice in facilitating integration. We are committed to further developing the program promoting greater social inclusion in co-operation with civil society.

Finland is one of the EU countries that have supported Greece and other Mediterranean countries by pledging to relocate a total of 175 unaccompanied minors and single-parent families. So far, 72 unaccompanied minors have been relocated from Greece, 30 from Cyprus, and the cooperation continues with these countries as well as with Malta and Italy. Alongside this cooperation, we look forward to seeing the discussions on the reform of our asylum system relaunched.

COVID-19 has deepened the global learning crisis and threatens to widen inequalities even further. Interruptions in education will have severe long-term implications, especially for people in vulnerable situations such as refugees. Girls and persons with disabilities are among the most vulnerable ones. Special attention must be paid to safe reopening and functioning of schools. Finland supports UNHCR and its partners in your efforts to ensure quality protective education for refugee children. Education is a basic human right.

The conflicts in the world have not eased this year. The importance of IHL has again been highlighted during the pandemic. Health regulations and other measures taken by states and non-state actors do not displace IHL

rules on humanitarian access. Consent to humanitarian operations is not discretionary.

We would like to thank you for your efforts to update your results-based management. 45% of our funding is flexible, non-earmarked core funding. The pandemic has indeed shown the importance of non-earmarked core contributions. We encourage further any efforts to highlight their benefits.

Mr. High Commissioner,

UNHCR remains a key and strategic partner for Finland. For years you have been the biggest channel for our humanitarian aid. We recognize UNHCR's important work and the responsibility we all have towards UNHCR's persons of concern.

Finally, I would like to use this opportunity to thank UNHCR's senior leadership for your commitment to and focus on disability inclusion, a high priority for Finland.

Thank you.