



Geneva

Executive Committee of the
High Commissioner's Programme
Seventy-Second session

General Debate

Geneva, 5 October 2021

Statement by Sweden

H.E. Ms Anna Jardfelt, Permanent Representative to the UN

Madam/Mister Vice-Chair, Mr High Commissioner, Excellencies, Colleagues and Friends,

Sweden aligns itself with the statement made by the European Union and we offer the following statement in national capacity:

Mr High Commissioner,

This year marks the 70th anniversary of the 1951 Refugee Convention, and the mandate of the UNHCR could not be more important. We note with concern the growing number of humanitarian crises around the world, the record high global displacement that has followed in their wake, and the increasingly complex conditions under which you and your staff operate. Sweden would like to pay tribute to UNHCR for your tireless efforts to support affected populations.

Madam/Mister Vice Chair,

Solidarity and responsibility for persons in need of international protection remains crucial. Sweden has for a long time taken a large responsibility for asylum seekers and we uphold a yearly resettlement quota of 5,000 places.

Sweden is also proud to be one of UNHCR's top donors of flexible and unearmarked funding. Such funding allows UNHCR to act quickly to address unpredictable situations, to prioritise and to use resources efficiently. Therefore, we strongly encourage other donors to increase their flexible funding and enter

into multi-year agreements. Sweden looks forward to the signing of a new Strategic Partnership Agreement with UNHCR later this year.

Madam/Mister Vice Chair,

As COVID-19 restrictions are now lifted across many countries, we must not lose sight of the parts of the world where vaccination is far from complete. Refugees and forcibly displaced persons' exposure to COVID-19 adds an additional layer of vulnerability to already precarious living conditions. Sweden supports a robust multilateral response to the COVID-19 pandemic through COVAX, and we are the largest contributor to COVAX per capita.

Over the past year, while the world's attention has been directed at responding to the pandemic, conflict, persecution, extreme weather events due to climate change and natural disasters have continued to uproot populations all around the world. In Afghanistan, Syria, Sudan, Ethiopia, and the Sahel, we see examples of the interplay between climate and conflict driving displacement, and the human suffering that follows.

It is high time we make space on the agenda for the critical issue of our time – the global climate crisis. We welcome that UNHCR is stepping up efforts on climate action, including through the adoption of a new Strategic Framework. Sweden supports the Clean Energy Challenge, and we look forward taking stock of this and other pledges at the High Level Officials Meeting in December.

The implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees is our collective responsibility. The meeting in December will be key to keep up momentum and ensure continued progress towards the Compact's objectives. We look forward to continuing our engagement.

Sweden welcomes the publication of the report of the Secretary-General's High Level Panel on Internal Displacement. Addressing protracted displacement will require a concerted system-wide response and close cooperation among several UN agencies and partners, where UNHCR needs to do its part.

Madam/Mister Vice-Chair,

I highly commend UNHCR and its staff for the honourable decision to stay and deliver in Afghanistan. Despite highly unpredictable and challenging circumstances UNHCR remain determined to deliver protection and humanitarian assistance to persons of concern in Afghanistan and neighbouring countries.

We are deeply concerned by the situation in Yemen, the world's largest humanitarian crisis. At the high-level pledging event, co-hosted by Sweden, Switzerland and the EU, we announced an additional contribution of 3 MUSD

to UNHCR in Yemen. We continue to push for full, safe, and unhindered humanitarian access in our dialogue with the parties.

The conflict in Tigray and the regional spill-over remain cause for serious concern, and we were shocked that several senior UN officials leading the humanitarian response to deliver life-saving aid to people in desperate need were expelled last week. This is totally unacceptable and we reiterate the imperative to ensure safe, rapid and unhindered access for humanitarian actors.

Mr High Commissioner,

This remains a time of change for UNHCR as an organisation. Sweden welcomes the progress made across the different fronts of the transformation agenda. This is change that we believe will make UNHCR better equipped to deliver effectively on its critical mandate.

Finally, I would like to assure you that we will do our utmost to continue being a reliable and steadfast partner for you and your staff. We look forward to pursuing our close cooperation

Thank you.