



**Statement by Mr. Raivo KÜÜT, Undersecretary for Population and Civil society,
Ministry of Interior, at the 73rd plenary session of UNHCR's Executive Committee, 10 –
14 October 2022**

Mr Chair,

Estonia aligns itself with the Statement delivered by the EU on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

Estonia commends the UNHCR for fulfilling its lead role for the provision of international protection to refugees and forcibly displaced persons in increasingly complex humanitarian contexts. We much appreciate UNHCR's staff members' and partners' work on the ground, alleviating dire humanitarian needs, often in very difficult circumstances.

We also much welcome your reappointment, High Commissioner Grandi, for another 2.5 years.

The world is unfortunately a very different place today in comparison with a year ago, where we already stated that humanitarian needs were at all-time high. Estonia remains concerned about these numerous situations around the globe, such as in Afghanistan, Syria, Ethiopia, the Sahel region, Myanmar and Yemen.

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In 2022 the number of people forcibly displaced has exceeded the devastating milestone of 100 million – more than 10 million more than last year.

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Much of this increase has been created by the Russia's war of aggression.

The Russian attack on Ukraine has been the cause for more than 7.5 million new refugees, additionally to 7 million of Internally Displaced Persons in Ukraine, most of them women and children. 17.7 million Ukrainians – 40 per cent of the country's population – are now in urgent need of humanitarian assistance.

The Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine is blatant violation of international law. The gravely devastating consequences of this aggression – not only for Europe but globally – cannot be overstated.

The rise in food insecurity, rising food prices and energy crisis are a real and direct consequence of the Russian aggression, which affects adversely millions of already vulnerable people around the world.

It has led to the worst humanitarian, refugee and food crisis since World War II.

Let me be clear, the impact of the Russian aggression is not limited to Ukraine – the most vulnerable in the world are paying a steep price of the Russian aggression; and despite the repeated calls by the General Assembly and the International Court of Justice, Russia still continues its war in violation of international law.

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And Russia's large-scale missile attack yesterday on cities across Ukraine is a sobering example, which caused unforgivable loss of life and widespread damage. We condemn these shocking attacks in the strongest possible terms.

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Estonia is doing its part to help and share the burden. To date, Estonia has sent an estimated 22 million EUR in humanitarian aid to Ukraine. We are currently hosting a number of Ukrainian refugees equal to more than 4% of our population. Estonia is doing everything we can in order to apply a whole of society approach to refugees – the whole society, including the government and ministries, social system, private sector and civil society is involved in order to make sure we provide an effective refugee response.

In Estonia, the procedure of granting temporary protection to Ukrainian refugees is made as swift as possible, from applying protection to receiving a residence permit card within 45 minutes, which grants access to Estonian social system, education system and labour market.

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In these challenging times, we welcome more than ever the UNHCR's focus on longer-term durable solutions that would bring the humanitarian, development and peace actors to work closer together, as working apart is no longer an option.

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Mr. Chairperson,

Estonia commends once again the UNHCR for its hard work to alleviate the situation of the world's most vulnerable all around the globe. Estonia is committed to assisting the UNHCR as a flexible donor and UNHCR can count on Estonia's support also in the future.

Thank you.