

**Statement by the Republic of Poland during the 73<sup>rd</sup> session of the UNHCR Executive Committee (Geneva, 10-14 October 2022)**

*Mr. Chair, Mr. High Commissioner, Distinguished Colleagues,*

Let me express our grave concern about the missile attacks on the public areas in multiple locations in Ukraine which have taken place lately. It is shocking to hear about such disgraceful violations of International Humanitarian Law by attacking innocent civilians in residential areas.

Poland aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union and would like to address the Committee in its national capacity.

*Chair,*

Poland would like to express the highest acknowledgement for the bravery of Ukrainian refugees, represented mainly by mothers – forced to flee their households, struggling every day in a foreign country for the better tomorrow of their children and caring for the elderly and sick ones.

From the very start of Russia's unprovoked and unjustified invasion of Ukraine, Poland is acting on three fronts to support Ukrainian civilians: *firstly*, we deliver humanitarian aid to affected population, including internally displaced persons in Ukraine; *secondly*, we serve as a hub for transferring international humanitarian aid through our border with Ukraine; and *thirdly and finally*, we host and provide complex support in the Polish territory to the biggest community of Ukrainian refugees.

Due to exceptional legal steps undertaken by the Polish Government, currently over 1.4 million of Ukrainian citizens have received Polish ID number and enjoy advantages of identical public services as any citizen of Poland. Moreover, around half a million of war refugees from Ukraine have been employed in Poland since mid-March.

It is estimated that the total number of Ukrainian refugees in Poland since February is approximately 2 million people. Taking into account

the number of Ukrainians staying in Poland before the war, the overall number of Ukrainian citizens currently residing in Poland amounts to around 3.5 million people.

It is worth underlining that the vast majority of the Polish society got involved in helping refugees from Ukraine. This assistance took various forms – from financial and material support, through different types of voluntary activities, to providing their own houses and apartments to the people without a roof over their heads.

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

The total cost of Polish assistance provided by means of the Government Strategic Reserves Agency exceeded already 190 million EUR. This aid includes inter alia: food assistance, medical supplies, logistical and IT support, and the costs of organizing reception centres.

Additionally in 2022, Poland will finance humanitarian projects delivered by NGOs, mainly in Ukraine with an allocation of ca. 2.5 million EUR. The support will cover activities of Polish NGOs in cooperation with Ukrainian partners in the areas of: food, health, shelter, WASH, logistics, financial aid.

*Chair,*

According to UNHCR report “Lives on hold: profiles and intentions of refugees from Ukraine”, it is estimated that almost 80% of Ukrainian refugees not willing to return, wish to stay in their host countries, which means their presence in Poland is predicted to be of a long-term character.

The scale, form, and intensity of assistance offered by Poland to refugees have evolved with the situation and expectations related to the end of the conflict. After spontaneous and dominant social effort at the beginning of the war, we turned into adaptation stage, where the state’s role increased in the framework of the welfare system. We invest significantly into inclusion and education of Ukrainian children and teenagers many of whom came to Poland on their own, and we take any possible effort to ensure there is no lost generation in Ukrainian society. The last stage – full inclusion and integration of

Ukrainian guests – would require more efforts to ensure social cohesion.

Additionally, observing the growing number of IDPs in Ukraine, we are highly concerned about another possible wave of refugees arriving in the light of the upcoming winter.

*Mr. High Commissioner,*

In this challenging setting UNHCR remains one of Poland's strategic partners and we sustain this constant support. This year Poland, apart from hosting millions of refugees, have made contributions for UNHCR activities in Moldova, Syria, Afghanistan and most recently to Pakistan in response to the extensive floods. In addition, Poland this year has contributed 1 million EUR to the World Food Programme to support food security in Africa and to show our solidarity with African countries suffering from food crisis caused by Russian aggression in Ukraine. We believe that food aid plays an important role in preventing refugee crises around the world.

In conclusion, let me assure you, *Mr. High Commissioner*, that Poland remains a fully committed supporter to the UNHCR's mandate and to everyday arduous efforts of its personnel worldwide, including in my own country.

*Thank you.*