



**Statement by Ambassador Dušan MATULAY, Permanent Representative of
SLOVAKIA to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in
Geneva**

Agenda item 3: General debate

**73rd session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme
(10-14 October 2022)**

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by the distinguished representative of the European Union. I would like to make a few remarks in my national capacity.

Let me begin by thanking the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. Filippo Grandi, for his informative and comprehensive opening statement highlighting various aspects of the work of the UNHCR. We thank him for his leadership and welcome the renewal of his mandate by the UN General Assembly for a further two and a half years. I would also like to pay tribute to UNHCR staff for their dedicated work in the challenging landscape in which the organization operates today.

Mr. Chairman,

This year has seen a huge increase in the number of displaced people around the world, forced to flee conflict, violence, human rights violations, persecution and climate-related events. As announced by the UNHCR, the number has now surpassed 100 million for the first time on record, with more and more refugee situations becoming protracted. Against this backdrop, UNHCR's unique mandate and crucial role has never been more relevant.

To succeed in giving relief to a growing number of forcibly uprooted people around the world the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) must be implemented effectively and comprehensively. At the same time, the UNHCR's internal reform process currently under way needs to be sustained to strengthen the capacity of the agency to deliver best results in line with the UNHCR's renewed Strategic Directions for 2022-2026. I would also like to stress that focus should be retained on addressing the drivers of forced displacement and how to better translate our long-term goal of conflict prevention and resolution into reality.

Mr. Chairman,

An ongoing refugee crisis began in Europe in late February this year after the Russian Federation's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The position of my Government on the political, economic and humanitarian aspects of the war against Ukraine is well known: We fully support

Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. We are deeply concerned by the growing human cost and suffering caused by the armed conflict.

As a result of Russia's unprovoked, unjustified and unlawful war on Ukraine, one-third of Ukrainians have been forcibly displaced from their homes. Women, children and those most vulnerable account for the vast majority. This is one of the largest displacement crises in the world today with devastating knock-on effects on the global economy.

I am proud to reiterate our commitment as one of the neighboring countries to Ukraine to continue to provide first reception and humanitarian assistance to civilians fleeing the violence in Ukraine. More than 870,000 people have crossed the Slovak border, of which more than 97,000 registered for temporary protection status in my country since the war began.

Further, I wish to express our heartfelt gratitude to the Office of the High Commissioner for its rapid response to and strong support of the Slovak government-led efforts and interventions to meet the urgent needs of Ukrainians who have arrived in Slovakia. We look forward to continuing this partnership at this critical time when my country is confronted with the largest refugee emergency in its history. In addition, we stand ready to continue our dialogue with the Office of the High Commissioner to deepen our collaboration on other issues of mutual concern to the Government of Slovakia and the UNHCR. Last but not least, I should also like to express our sincere appreciation to all donors for their generous financial support of the inter-agency Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRP).

Mr. Chairman,

The scope, scale and complexity of the challenges of forced displacement globally are unprecedented as has been repeatedly noted. By June this year, UNHCR had declared 37 emergencies in 25 countries. Never before has the United Nations been asked to reach so many with humanitarian assistance.

I would like to stress that we are equally concerned and empathize with the plight of refugees and internally displaced persons in hotspots ranging from Syria and the Sahel to Venezuela and Myanmar. My country is determined to continue doing its utmost to contribute to the combined effort to help forcibly displaced people and their host countries and communities in these parts of the world as well.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, let me say that protecting, assisting, and upholding the rights and dignity of forcibly displaced and stateless people is both a collective endeavor and a mutual responsibility affirmed by the Global Compact on Refugees. To this end, Slovakia, for its part, reaffirms its full commitment to achieve these objectives in close collaboration with the Office of the High Commissioner and the Member States.

Thank you.