

**Statement delivered during the 73rd session of the Executive Committee of the
High Commissioner's Programme
(Geneva, 10 – 14 October 2022)**

Mr. Chair,
High Commissioner,

Republic of Moldova aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union during current General Debates.

Excellency, Dear Colleagues,

It is the first time for the Republic of Moldova to address this Executive Committee as a country facing a massive refugee crisis. While in previous years we have been committed and supporting UNHCR work and approaches, it is with a different perspective that we are coming to this meeting today.

Following the act of aggression committed by the Russian Federation against Ukraine and its people, an act strongly condemned by Republic of Moldova, breaching the principles of the UN Charter and a flagrant violation of international law, including international humanitarian law, we have found ourselves in the midst of a humanitarian crisis unfolding with unprecedented speed.

We have all been appalled by the massive Russian missile attacks against Ukrainian cities, especially civilian and critical infrastructure. These attacks are causing human losses and suffering and significant destruction.

According to the verified airspace monitoring data, three of the cruise missiles launched from the Russian military ships located in the Black Sea on targets in Ukraine have crossed Moldovan airspace. The Republic of Moldova firmly condemns the violation of its sovereign airspace. This incident created serious risks to the security of the Republic of Moldova, its citizens and the people refugeed in our country.

The Republic of Moldova has firmly demonstrated its commitment and engagement in ensuring international protection for those seeking refuge in our country. With the support of UNHCR and other partners, the Government has taken coordinated actions to manage both transit and refugee flows from Ukraine. To date, more than half a million of refugees have entered Moldova, with more than 80 000 choosing to stay in the country. And we are speaking mostly about women and children. **These figures brought Moldova to be the state receiving the highest number of refugees per capita, and the first non-EU country facing this inflow.** “A small country with a big heart” moto became a reality, given the spontaneous readiness of Moldovan citizens to open their homes to more than 80% of the refugees.

Dear High Commissioner,

With the challenging times we are now experiencing, we are very pleased that you, High Commissioner Filippo Grandi, will continue to lead UNHCR. We commend your personal

commitment and dedication to the refugee cause and reassure you of our continued support in these efforts.

Your remark related to the multi-challenges faced by the recipient countries of refugees is absolutely valid. Allow me to underline that our countries were already facing overlapping crises due to the sharp increase in mid-winter of the energy prices. The refugee crisis is taking place against the backdrop of a high inflation rate that reached last month 34% - a level that is the highest in Europe and is hurting the living standards of an already impoverished population. This significantly increases the burden on the Government of Moldova in the effort to effectively manage the refugee crisis and ensure decent living conditions for its own citizens.

We note with appreciation UNHCR's and partners support in providing assistance for immediate needs, as well as assessing the long-term assistance needs to support a rapid and sustainable recovery. At the same time, the pressure on the local population has also increased enormously. Given that most of refugees are being hosted by Moldovan people , it is highly important to concentrate our effort on supporting both refugees and host communities.

Currently, we are the eyewitness of how the challenges are being shifted from managing huge flows and accommodating the refugee in accommodation centres, to policy actions aimed to ensure their social inclusion by providing access to labour market, social protection system, medical services, infant care or schooling. As of September, 1 782 of children are being enrolled in country's education system. The government streams to implement human rights-based, gender and age-responsive policies in order to uphold fundamental rights of refugees, based on such principles as equality, equity and inclusion.

Many of these aspects and lessons learned could be further discussed within the regional round table to be organised in late November in Chisinau. One key aspects that we would like to highlight as a lesson learned and as an appreciation of how we saw it on the ground is the interaction between various partners and organisations. The synergy is key under current circumstances, notably when there is an increased gap between the needs and available resources.

Mr. Chair,

The Republic of Moldova would like to join the previous speakers in expressing appreciation for the UNHCR works in conducting emergency preparedness and response activities. We express high gratitude to the support provided in all these months by various partners under UNHCR guidance. Protection, prevention and response must remain the overreaching priority and main goal of UNHCR's work, with a particular focus on the most vulnerable.

We welcome the call to scale up humanitarian assistance. We will continue keeping our borders open for those who seek refuge in Moldova. Ukraine and Ukrainian people are not alone. In the same time, we are realistic that we would need much of support not only in short term, but also in long term perspective. Within 7 months since the start of war in the neighbouring country, almost 10 thousand people applied for asylum. To safeguard inclusive policies the national authorities are finalizing the mechanism of granting

temporary protection, providing the refugee people with a stable and predictable protection status

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate Moldova's commitment to continue to be a strong partner of UNHCR and stand ready to actively engage with all actors in tackling this and other humanitarian crisis affecting the world. We very much count that this trend of proving the necessary support will be maintained to ease this unprecedented burden and strengthen our resilience.

Thank you.