

UNHCR ExCom 2022 - New Zealand statement

Thank you, Chair.

New Zealand is grateful to UNHCR for its invaluable work and relentless efforts to provide humanitarian assistance, protection, and durable solutions for displaced populations worldwide. We note with concern new and intensified conflicts, spiking food insecurity, and natural disasters driving further displacement. We remain committed to our close partnership with UNHCR, and to working closely with the international community to support refugees and displaced populations.

New Zealand recognises the specific protection needs and acute vulnerabilities of refugees and other people of concern to UNHCR. We must work collaboratively across the United Nations system and alongside civil society partners to ensure that the rights of the most vulnerable are protected and defended.

The continuing rise in forced displacement due to armed conflict is of grave concern, and requires a truly global response. New Zealand condemns, unequivocally, the unprovoked and unjustified attack by Russia on Ukraine. Our immigration system has responded to Russia's invasion through fast-tracking support for Ukrainians to remain in or return to New Zealand immediately.

We have also introduced a 2022 Special Ukraine Policy to allow the estimated 1,600 Ukrainian-born citizens and residents in New Zealand to sponsor their parents, grandparents, adult siblings or adult children, who are ordinarily resident in Ukraine, to shelter safely in New Zealand for a period of two years.

We remain concerned about the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan, and committed to supporting international humanitarian and protection efforts for the people of Afghanistan. New Zealand's response to the Taliban takeover in August 2021 included the implementation of an emergency visa process for Afghan nationals at risk of harm due to their links with New Zealand. New Zealand also set aside 750 places of our three-year Refugee Quota Programme for Afghan refugees.

New Zealand acknowledges that humanitarian crises have the potential to exacerbate existing vulnerabilities, and the consequences of such compounded crises can set back generations. Humanitarian action must be rooted in a robust and inclusive protection agenda to ensure all persons of concern are afforded adequate protection - in particular vulnerable groups such as women, children, elderly, disabled, LGBTQI+ people, and other minority groups.

We welcome UNHCR's commitment to inclusive humanitarian action and in particular, gender inclusion and disability inclusion. We also commend UNHCR's work to recognise differentiated protection needs.

Humanitarian agencies need flexible and predictable funding in order to respond effectively to emerging crises. New Zealand's multi-year and unearmarked funding to UNHCR is designed to help meet that need. Over the last year we have complemented this core funding with contributions to UNHCR's humanitarian protection and assistance programmes for Rohingya, Afghan, and Ukrainian refugees.

New Zealand remains committed to working with UNHCR and the international community to resettle refugees who have priority protection needs and require resettlement as a durable solution. Our long-standing Refugee Quota Programme demonstrates that commitment. We are also working to rebalance our regional allocations to better reflect global refugee resettlement needs and UNHCR's operational priorities.

New Zealand reiterates its commitment to fully implementing its Global Refugee Forum pledges, on education, employment, community sponsorship, support to new and emerging resettlement countries in our region, and building protection capacity in the Asia-Pacific.

New Zealand's focus at home remains on our partnerships with UNHCR, service providers, and communities across the country to welcome refugees and support their successful settlement.

New Zealand recognises the importance of refugee voices in shaping solutions and responses. Nationally, we are working with domestic and international partners to establish a Refugee Advisory Panel in New Zealand. This Panel seeks to ensure refugee interests, perspectives, and knowledge inform and influence refugee-related policies in New Zealand.

We are making good progress in implementing our extended Community Organisation Refugee Sponsorship Category pilot, which is additional to our Refugee Quota Programme. We would like to thank our international partners, including UNHCR, for their continued support and enthusiasm as we work to implement this extended pilot.

In closing, New Zealand commends you, High Commissioner, and the work of your staff throughout the world for your commitment and service to the world's refugees, internally displaced and other persons of concern. We are committed to doing our part to respond to the protection and assistance needs of the most vulnerable.