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GABINETE DO MINISTRO  
DA ADMINISTRAÇÃO INTERNA

Mr. Chairman

Let me congratulate, on behalf of the Portuguese Government, the United Nations and the UNHCR for the initiative of promoting the first Global Refugee Forum. We welcome the opportunity to engage in such an important discussion of concrete measures to put in place.

It is our goal to find a future for every single refugee and to give refugees concrete answers and pathways for a better life, where peace, health, education and a job can be a possibility and not just a dream.

We also need to reduce pressure in host countries and to build capacity in countries of origin and to effectively cooperate for their sustainable development.

Portugal has participated since day 1 of the so-called European refugee crisis of 2015. We engaged ourselves, actively and constructively, in the European effort to welcome refugees, supporting the European Commission's proposals for a common European asylum policy, based on the principles of responsibility and solidarity, respect for the dignity of the human person and the fight against human trafficking. Other than the political debate, we engaged ourselves in receiving refugees – at all levels, from central administration to local municipalities; from NGOs to individual citizens' action, from formal programmes designed to receive refugees to civil society mobilisation in frontline countries.

Portugal is the 6<sup>th</sup> EU country that most refugees welcomed under the Relocation Programme. We also offered to participate in the UNHCR Voluntary Resettlement Programme from Egypt and Turkey in 2019 and 2020. We committed ourselves in every single emergency response to disembarkments from humanitarian vessels in the Mediterranean Sea since the summer of 2018.

We were last year in Morocco to adopt the Global Compact for Migration, and we are strongly committed to the Global Compact on Refugees. We are engaged in collective responsibility-sharing.





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Let me share with you some of the voluntary pledges we proposed for the next years to come. They will bring concrete outcomes for refugees:

- 1) We commit to develop an adequate strategy to **upgrade Portuguese asylum capacity**, to develop a comprehensive and **accessible language learning programme for refugees** and to strengthen the **Refugee Status Determination system**;
- 2) We commit to promote the quality, effectiveness and sustainability of the **Portuguese refugees' resettlement programme**, including through the regular coordination, monitoring and evaluation, with the refugees' participation throughout the programme;
- 3) We commit to promote and **increase capacity-building of refugee-led associations and increase refugees' role in decision-making processes**;
- 4) We commit to establish mechanisms to identify, protect, prevent and **reduce statelessness** in Portugal.
- 5) We commit to provide the issuance of the **convention travel documents for refugees and stateless persons** according with international standards;
- 6) We commit to push for permanent, stable solutions to promote **legal, regular and secure pathways** to Europe, notwithstanding our availability to participate in ad-hoc situations of relocation;
- 7) We commit to **ensure financial contributions** for the outcomes of this Global Refugee Forum, for joint operations of the UNHCR/IOM operation in Colombia (to address urgent needs of Venezuelan refugees), and within the Sustainable Resettlement and Complementary Pathways Initiative.

Last, but not least, let me highlight a joint contribution of the **Global Platform for Syrian Students and several Portuguese higher education institutions**, named "Setting up a Rapid Response Mechanism for Higher Education in Emergencies". The Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs will

give a financial contribution to support higher education to Syrian refugees and, as a pilot programme for this Mechanism, also to Venezuelan refugees.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me finish by congratulating all initiatives related to international cooperation in the framework of the Global Refugee Forum and reaffirming Portugal's commitment to remain active in this subject and to cooperate with all those who share common values of solidarity and promotion of human rights. Shall we all together contribute to achieve the very first article of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights - All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.

Thank you.