

**Global Refugee Forum
Palais des Nations, Geneva**

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59

STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF ICELAND

**H.E. Mrs. Ragnhildur Arnjóltsdóttir
Permanent Secretary of the Prime Minister's Office**

Mr. Chair/Madame Chair, Mr. High Commissioner, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I would like to thank the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Government of Switzerland for co-hosting this first Global Refugee Forum.

The Forum gives us an important moment to reaffirm our commitment to strengthen our efforts around the shared objective of solidarity with refugees and host countries.

The high and increasing number of displaced people in the world is one of the great challenges of our times, needless to say to you that are present here today.

The Government of Iceland commends UNHCR for its tireless efforts in responding to these escalating humanitarian needs in complex and protracted crisis situations worldwide.

Large-scale refugee flows place considerable demands on host countries and the international community, requiring collective and concerted responses.

Human rights are the natural entitlement of all persons and it must be assured that displaced people enjoy human rights and dignity and that vulnerable and disadvantaged groups are not left behind.

In recent years Iceland has become a destination country for those seeking asylum and we see a great increase of those that receive international protection. We try to secure that families will not be divided and those family members that are left behind are assisted to reach safety in Iceland.

Iceland has over the years endeavored to be a reliable partner of UNHCR by contributing to the provision of emergency relief and humanitarian assistance to refugees and other displaced people in areas of crisis and conflict. Iceland will continue to demonstrate its commitment to the refugee cause and to strengthen its support to UNHCR's operations.

Iceland is entering into its second multi-year General Agreement with UNHCR for the period 2020-2023. In the new agreement we will provide an annual unearmarked allocation of 500 thousand USD towards UNHCR's core programme budget with a total value of 2 million USD. Our annual allocation will be predictable and disbursed at the beginning of each year.

Iceland also commits to share the burden and responsibility for supporting and hosting refugees and welcomes every year quota refugees to Iceland in a very good co-operation with UNHCR. Resettlement of refugees to Iceland has systematically increased in recent years. This year, 75 refugees resettled in Iceland as part of the Government's resettlement programme and in the next two year we will increase the resettlement program by 33%. Iceland has a longstanding successful history of resettling refugees. The program is built on close cooperation between the state, municipalities and the Icelandic Red Cross, as well as the UNHCR. The pillar of the program is the high participation of volunteers that welcome the refugees into the society. This is a model that has worked very well for us and for the refugees, and we offer our expertise to those countries that are considering a resettlement programme.

This weekend an Icelandic TV channel showed an interview with two young refugees from Syria recently resettled in Iceland, shoveling and clearing ways for the locals after a severe snow storm in the North of Iceland.

Their hard work both helped their community instantly and gave them as well an important role in the community. I wish I could show you a picture taken of them between meters high snow walls, with great smiles on their faces. Their act shows very clearly how settlement of refugees can be a great added value to a community. It is important to tell these positive stories.

Finally, I am glad to announce today that Iceland will contribute 25 million Icelandic kronas, approximately 205 thousand USD, towards UNHCR's 2020 Global Appeal. This is in addition to our multi-year allocation agreement.

Thank you Chair.