



I T A L Y

**STATEMENT BY
H.E. AMBASSADOR GIAN LORENZO CORNADO
AT THE 71st SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME
(GENEVA, 5th OCTOBER 2020)**

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Thank you Chair,

Mr. High Commissioner, dear Colleagues,

Italy aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union and would like to make some further remarks in its national capacity.

The exceptional circumstances we are confronted with today because of the COVID-19 pandemic were unimaginable one year ago, when we gathered in the ExCom format. What started as a health emergency rapidly turned into a major global crisis, with a huge socio-economic impact for all countries worldwide, highlighting our fragilities and worsening the conditions of the most vulnerable populations.

At the same time, as the virus knows no borders, the continuous appeal for mutual help and cooperation has shown that multilateralism is the only solution for an effective global response, in order to achieve true solidarity and to start rebuilding on more solid foundations.

Italy, since the beginning, has been at the forefront of the fight against the pandemic, by mobilizing financial resources and addressing emergency response and humanitarian needs, through the provision of support to both UNHCR and other Agencies and stakeholders engaged on the ground to mitigate the negative impact of

COVID-19. Allow me to commend UNHCR and its staff for their tireless efforts in addressing the global response and for truly embodying the “stay and deliver” principle, ensuring the provision of much needed humanitarian assistance.

The ongoing pandemic forced us to rethink day-to-day reality, to adapt to changing circumstances and to address the needs of an increasing number of persons falling under the mandate of the UNHCR. Against this backdrop, we were in the process of implementing the commitments arising from the first Global Refugee Forum, a historic event that turned out to be very timely in light of the current health crisis.

The pandemic might have slowed down some of our pledges, but it has not diverted us from confirming our engagement and strengthening our action, in close partnership with UNHCR. Despite severe operational problems, we have kept implementing part of our resettlement programs, in order to ease the pressure on countries hosting a considerable number of refugees and asylum seekers and we have continued offering humanitarian corridors for the safe transfer to Italy of particularly vulnerable refugees. We have also just launched the new edition of the « University Corridors for Refugees Project » benefiting refugee students from Middle East and African countries who will have a chance to complete or have access to university education in Italy and hopefully have the future they deserve.

The Global Refugee Forum and the Global Compact for Refugees are key elements that remind us of how the notions of responsibility and burden-sharing are central to today’s approach to forced displacement and they require the continuous active engagement from all stakeholders. To this end, we encourage UNHCR to keep the momentum and further expand its donor base, especially by increasingly involving the private sector and relevant international financial institutions.

Seventy years since its inception, UNHCR’s mandate remains as relevant as ever and the pandemic has further highlighted the necessity for such a skilled and competent entity to continue responding to new and protracted crises. The needs are on the rise,

the situation on the ground is getting more complex and Italy will try to do its part, at the best of its ability, as it has been doing for decades.

Chair, let me take this opportunity to reiterate my country's contribution and its strong commitment to providing support to UNHCR's humanitarian activities in major crisis areas, in line with its long-standing tradition of partnership and cooperation with the Agency.

We will keep engaging, also at the collective level, since we believe that the international community should step up its efforts to alleviate human suffering and address the humanitarian needs of asylum seekers, refugees, IDPs and stateless people, in a spirit of solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility.

Lastly, I would like to express our deepest appreciation for the outstanding work done by the High Commissioner Grandi during his tenure as head of UNHCR as well as for his inspiring and tireless leadership. We look forward to continue working with him in his next mandate.

I thank you for your attention Chair.