

**High-Level Officials Meeting
14-15 December 2021
Statement of the Republic of Lebanon**

Thank you, Mr. President,

I would like to extend my thanks to the government of Switzerland, UNHCR, and the High Commissioner of UNHCR, Mr. Filippo Grandi for organizing the High-Level Officials meeting to track the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees and maintain the momentum towards achieving its goals.

The crisis of refugees and displaced persons has extended to several countries, and among those, the Lebanese state. Lebanon constitutes a unique case, where a country that hosts the largest number of displaced persons and refugees per capita and per square kilometers, witnesses an unprecedented economic, financial, and social collapse, the consequences of which threatens the stability and security of not only Lebanon, but also that of the Middle East and the Mediterranean region. Therefore, it is necessary for international organizations and donor States to address the crisis of Syrian displacement in Lebanon in a new light and with a different paradigm, given the gravity of the situation. This multifaceted crisis, described by the World Bank as the worst in contemporary history, and the challenges emanating thereof, affect Lebanon's institutions and all its residents, including citizens, displaced persons, and refugees; with the Lebanese falling under the most vulnerable groups, as 78% of them live below the poverty line and 28% of them live in extreme poverty. Hence, it is imperative to assess the impact and cost of the Syrian displacement crisis on all sectors in Lebanon, in order to mitigate its effects, to better address the needs of refugees and displaced persons, and to fairly implement the principle of burden and responsibility sharing as stipulated in the Global Compact on Refugees. Unfortunately, the face of Lebanon as you know it is changing, while refugees and displaced persons who constitute more than a third of its population remain in Lebanon, while thousands of its citizens are leaving the country in search for a better future, thus marking the fifth wave of Lebanese emigration.

Despite numerous challenges, Lebanon strives to follow through on its obligations towards refugees and displaced Syrians especially within the framework of the Global Compact on Refugees, through food, medical and legal aid, as well as development projects that target all segments of its population. Despite the pressure on the health system, Lebanon continues to make available its medical facilities for both citizens and displaced persons, at no fee to the latter. The government's vaccination campaign is targeting both citizens and displaced communities alike without any discrimination. The Government of Lebanon also made efforts to ease legal residency processes and continues to facilitate access to civil documentation, including birth and marriage registration to ensure that every person preserves their right to nationality. With respect to education, we are looking forward to building on RACE II achievements, to guarantee the right of every child in Lebanon to access quality education. Lebanese security forces have been deploying a great deal of efforts to prevent a growing number of desperate Lebanese and Syrian migrants from sailing towards European Union member states mainly Cyprus, seeking to escape Lebanon's worsening economic meltdown and we promptly readmit those who left from Lebanon.

Therefore, Lebanon underlines the importance of the effective application of the principle of Burden and Responsibility-Sharing enshrined in the Global Compact on Refugees in a way that responds to the needs of both displaced persons and the host community. Additionally, the efficient

and effective use of resources and dissemination of aid in host countries gains particular importance in Lebanon in light of the disparity in aid provided to displaced persons and refugees, on one hand, and to the host community on the other, that is causing increased tensions between these groups. Thus, it is vital to provide international aid to host communities in cooperation and coordination with the institutions of the host country to ensure their equitable distribution under specific strategies.

Lebanon requires the support of the Arab and international community to secure a decent life for its residents, whether citizens, displaced persons or refugees, starting with increased financing of development projects which provide basic services for the displaced persons and for host communities, as well as adequate support based on humanitarian standards to “leave no one behind”. One of the most important projects that equally benefits both host communities and the displaced is providing electricity through alternative means, in light of the energy crisis in Lebanon.

Lebanon reiterates its adherence to the principle of non-refoulment and reaffirms that the durable solution to the crisis of the displaced persons and refugees lies in their safe and dignified return to their countries, for both Palestinian refugees as well as the displaced Syrians, as Lebanon is a transit country and not a final destination, as stipulated in the Lebanese constitution that forbids settlement of non-Lebanese. Finally, we hope that the Lebanese government’s plan for the return of our displaced Syrian brothers to their country will be supported and that humanitarian reconstruction and early recovery in Syria will be initiated, in order to establish suitable conditions for the return of the displaced Syrians to their homeland without tying their return to the political settlement of the crisis in Syria.

Thank you, Mr. President.