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Remarks by the Director of the Division of Resilience and Solutions,

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Chairperson, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to be joined by my colleague, Elizabeth Tan, Director of the Division of International Protection, to present the conference room paper on Solutions.

This year's paper is **structured differently** from previous years. It approaches solutions more comprehensively and holistically – **this time with attention paid to solutions for internally displaced persons**. It highlights our collective efforts **to support conditions for returns in safety and dignity and for sustainable reintegration**. Finally, it also emphasizes the importance of **building resilience and agency** in our displacement response to better prepare displaced communities for durable solutions.

In recent years, the **rates of refugee returns have significantly declined**. Nearly **340,000 refugees returned in 2022**, representing a mere fraction of past years. Likewise, the number of **internally displaced persons** willing to return to their places of origin **reached 5.7 million**. We are seeing a worrying trend: **displacement is not only on the rise but is also becoming increasingly protracted**.

Ongoing and recurrent **conflicts, limited services and livelihoods**, as well as a **failure to redress housing, land and property and climate related challenges** are all impacting access to sustainable return. The on-going conflict in **Sudan** has led to the displacement of a significant number of people – both internally and across borders – undermining the efforts of the international community to drive forward sustainable solutions.

**Despite these significant challenges, we are seeing progress**. Like, the **cessation of refugee status for Ivorians** and the return of approximately 96%. This effectively concluded one of the most protracted refugee situations in West Africa. Elsewhere, in collaboration with stakeholders, **UNHCR facilitated the voluntary repatriation of over 207,000 Burundian refugees** since 2017. **Over 354,000 individuals returned to Syria** between 2016 to 2022 in a self-organized manner.

In addition, **5.7 million internal displaced persons were able to return** to their places of origin in 2022. In countries such as Ethiopia and Ukraine, UNHCR continued to promote durable solutions from the onset. The appointment of the **UNSG's Special Adviser on Solutions to Internal Displacement brought new impetus to the drive for resolving internal displacement**. UNHCR plays a central role in the Steering Group, to support UN Resident Coordinators in solutions coordination at country level.

In **South Sudan**, UNHCR and partners scaled up area-based approaches via the **Pockets of Hope Initiative**, which is focused on enhancing living conditions and access to services in communities. In **Afghanistan**, given the profound displacement challenges faced, **UNHCR and partners have improved access to essential services, including health, education, and livelihood opportunities, for 3.2 million Afghans** in some 80 priority areas of return and reintegration.

**Regional approaches also continue to play a pivotal role** through initiatives such as the IGAD Support platform, Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees and MIRPS in Latin America.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Our efforts to build resilience and promote inclusion have **gained momentum** through strategic partnerships with governments and development partners. **Colombia's** efforts to build resilience and promote inclusion, particularly in the context of hosting Venezuelan refugees and migrants, is commendable. With over 2.4 million Venezuelans seeking refuge in Colombia, **the government's implementation of the temporary protection permit has been instrumental** in facilitating their access to rights and socio-economic inclusion. **Colombia's role as a co-convenor of the upcoming Global Refugee Forum** later this year represents a unique opportunity to further demonstrate its leadership in the region to address human mobility.

The tangible benefits of supporting resilience and inclusion extend beyond refugees and include host communities. In **Uganda**, the collaboration between the Government, UNHCR, and the World Bank has successfully **transitioned parallel humanitarian systems towards inclusive national education, health, and water systems**. This joined up approach ensures refugees have access to vital resources and empowers them to rebuild their lives. UNHCR's support to **Mexico's** successful local integration programme has relocated thousands of refugees, significantly enhanced their well-being and contributed to national tax revenue. Similarly, **Brazil's** integration efforts have resulted in improved access to jobs, housing, and education for relocated Venezuelans.

**Poland's** inclusive approach grants Ukrainian refugees' essential documentation, access to healthcare, social benefits, and national education, ensuring their rights and successful integration into society. **Argentina's** Cities of Solidarity and Community Sponsorship initiatives stand as shining examples of community-based approaches to promote inclusion of refugees and asylum-seekers.

Co-existence and social cohesion are vital for the harmonious inclusion and integration of displaced populations. **Kenya's** recognition of the Pemba people as an ethnic community has resolved their stateless status, granting them equal rights and access to essential services thereby fostering social cohesion and inclusion. Additionally, the **transformative Twashiriki Plan** in Kenya builds upon the progress achieved through the implementation of the Refugee Act and integrated county plans. It represents a significant advancement in promoting inclusive and sustainable solutions that surpass traditional humanitarian approaches. **In short, we are seeing that inclusion policies are fundamental to fostering and advancing protection.**

Ladies and gentlemen,

Regarding Third-Country Solutions for refugees, **our vision is both ambitious and compelling**: to provide life-changing opportunities to three million refugees through **resettlement, complementary pathways, and family reunification** by 2030.

The ripples of the global pandemic and ongoing and recurrent conflicts in Afghanistan and Ukraine have strained resources and impacted resettlement efforts. Despite these challenges, over 57,000 refugees found new homes in 20 different countries. The five largest receiving countries – **United States, Canada, Germany, Sweden, and France** – have exemplified true leadership by offering a safe refuge to those in need. However, **resettlement places are becoming harder to secure**. Although it has been at the core of protection solidarity since UNHCR's inception, we are particularly concerned about the availability of places for emergency resettlement, for medical cases.

UNHCR is also actively engaged in a **global task force on refugee labour mobility and third country education pathways**, which seeks to remove barriers and create equal opportunities for qualified refugees. We collaborated with partners to establish education-focused programmes in **Belgium, France, and Ireland** to enable refugees to access quality education and pursue their goals. **Complementary pathways need to grow through the lifting of obstacles** to safe movement by refugees – most particularly through **the issuance and acceptance of machine-readable travel documents**.

**Family reunification** also stands as a cornerstone of UNHCR's commitment to preserving the bonds that connect people. The **Family Reunification Network** enhanced cooperation between States and partners in developing the responses to the crises in Afghanistan and Ukraine, contributing to emerging best practices to improve access to family reunification.

Ladies and gentlemen,

**In 2022, we witnessed several successful examples of collective action** from governments, international organizations, civil society, and the private sector to promote and support solutions for displaced and stateless populations. These collaborative efforts have yielded positive outcomes and demonstrated the power of working together towards solutions.

However, as the scale and complexity of displacement continue to increase, **we acknowledge the need for an amplified and expanded approach to promote greater responsibility sharing**.

As we look forward to the **second Global Refugee Forum in December 2023**, we have the opportunity to prioritize and work towards lasting solutions.

It is imperative that we seize this opportunity and continue to **foster cooperation, dialogue, and innovative approaches** to ensure the protection and solutions of all those affected by displacement and statelessness.