

Statement
by H.E. Ms. Yevheniia Filipenko, Permanent Representative
of Ukraine on a.i. 3 “General debate” of the 74th session
of the UNHCR Executive Committee
(11 October 2023, Geneva)

Mister Chairperson,
High Commissioner,
Distinguished delegates,

The delegation of Ukraine would like to echo the sentiments of the UN High Commissioner who in his opening statement described armed conflicts as major drivers of forced displacement.

In 2022, the world saw the highest-ever yearly increase in the number of forcibly displaced people due to the Russia`s armed aggression against my country perpetrated in gross violation of international law and the UN Charter.

It triggered one of the largest and fastest-growing displacement crises of our time, with its devastating impact stretching far beyond Ukraine.

20 months into the war, this crisis shows little to no sign of easing. More than 11 million Ukrainians remain displaced, including 5 million within Ukraine and a further 6,2 million who have been seeking safety abroad.

By repeatedly targeting civilian population and civilian infrastructure, Russia aims to spread fear and terror among civilians, make their life unbearable, thus willfully fueling displacement crisis.

This precarious situation leads to increased vulnerability of the displaced people. For many of them, durable solutions are a distant prospect.

We are grateful to UNHCR for supporting the efforts of the Government of Ukraine aimed at addressing complex humanitarian and displacement challenges. Millions of people in Ukraine and abroad have been reached with UNHCR life-saving assistance and protection services.

We call upon UNHCR to continue its active engagement in humanitarian-development action in Ukraine, in particular through supporting newly adopted Strategy and Action Plan for Internal Displacement until 2025 and focusing on programmes that support recovery and reintegration efforts.

My delegation would also like to call upon the donor community to back UNHCR response by allocating necessary funding.

Ukraine expresses its sincere gratitude to all countries that provided temporary protection or similar national protection schemes to Ukrainians temporarily displaced by the war. We also welcome the recent EU decision to extend the Temporary Protection Directive for more than 4 million displaced Ukrainians living in the EU for an additional year.

Safety and security situation permitting, Ukraine would be ready to foster conditions enabling people temporarily displaced abroad to return home. This would be critical as my country is setting out on the path towards recovery and reconstruction.

We are deeply alarmed at the dire situation of hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians, including children, who have been unlawfully deported from the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine to Russia in violation of international humanitarian law. These people are left behind in depressed and remote regions of Russia with limited or no access to livelihood opportunities and critical services, pressed to assume Russian citizenship or face restrictions.

Children are among the most vulnerable. Russia violates the fundamental principles of child protection in time of war by issuing Russian passports to the abducted Ukrainian children, stealing their identity, placing them in Russian families for adoption, and indoctrinating them in special camps.

We urge Russia to provide UNHCR and other established humanitarian and human rights mechanisms with full and unhindered access to those people to facilitate their safe and dignified return to Ukraine in accordance with international law.

To conclude, let me reiterate that, given its experience in addressing forced displacement, Ukraine is committed to contributing to the work of UNHCR and its Executive Committee aimed at strengthening the international protection regime and responding to displacement situations around the world.

I thank you.