

UNHCR ExCom 2023 - New Zealand statement

Thank you, Chair.

Before I begin my statement, I wish to add that New Zealand condemns unequivocally the terrorist attacks led by Hamas on Israel. We are appalled by the targeting of civilians and the taking of hostages which violate fundamental international humanitarian law principles. New Zealand calls for restraint, the protection of civilians, and the upholding of international humanitarian law by all parties. We also extend condolences to the victims of the earthquake in Afghanistan.

Chair,

New Zealand expresses its deep gratitude to UNHCR for its tireless efforts in providing crucial humanitarian assistance, protection, and sustainable solutions for displaced communities worldwide. We are acutely aware of the escalating conflicts, heightened food insecurity, and Climate Change induced natural disasters leading to further displacement. New Zealand remains committed to our partnership with UNHCR, as we collaborate closely with the global community to uphold the rights and well-being of refugees and displaced populations.

New Zealand is conscious of the protection needs and acute vulnerabilities of refugees and individuals under UNHCR's care. It is imperative that we engage in cooperative efforts across the United Nations system and alongside civil society partners to safeguard the rights of the most vulnerable.

The persistent surge in forced displacement due to armed conflict is a matter of grave concern, necessitating a genuinely global response. New Zealand continues to condemn, unequivocally, Russia's actions which have caused immense suffering – there is no victor in unjustified and unprovoked aggression.

New Zealand acknowledges that humanitarian crises have the potential to exacerbate existing vulnerabilities, and the repercussions of such compounded crises can set progress back for generations. Humanitarian action must be grounded in a robust and all-encompassing protection agenda, ensuring all persons of concern receive adequate protection, with special attention to vulnerable groups such as women, children, the elderly, disabled, LGBTQIA+ individuals, and other minority groups.

We welcome UNHCR's dedication to inclusive humanitarian action, especially in terms of gender and disability inclusion. We also applaud UNHCR's efforts to recognise differentiated protection needs.

Humanitarian agencies require flexible and reliable funding to effectively respond to emerging crises. New Zealand's multi-year and unearmarked funding to UNHCR is designed to address this need. Over the past year, we have supplemented this core funding with contributions to UNHCR's humanitarian protection and assistance programs for Rohingya, Sudanese, and Ukrainian refugees.

New Zealand remains resolute in its commitment to collaborate with UNHCR and the broader international community in the resettlement of refugees, ensuring their seamless integration and well-being in our society.

New Zealand reaffirms its unwavering commitment to the full realisation of its Global Refugee Forum pledges. These encompass crucial areas such as education, employment, community sponsorship, bolstering support to emerging resettlement countries within our region, and strengthening protection capacity across the Asia-Pacific.

New Zealand recognises the importance of refugee voices in shaping solutions and responses. Nationally we have worked with domestic and international partners to establish a Refugee Advisory Panel in New Zealand to provide New Zealand's former refugee community the ability to have a voice on matters that directly affect them. The Panel is a mechanism for former refugees to have meaningful participation in the development of strategies, settlement initiatives and policy that affects them.

We continue to implement our extended Community Organisation Refugee Sponsorship Category pilot, in addition to our established Refugee Quota Programme. We would like to thank our international partners, including UNHCR, for their continued support and enthusiasm as we work to implement this extended pilot.

Finally, New Zealand extends its praise to you, High Commissioner, and your dedicated staff across the globe for your unyielding commitment and service to the world's refugees, internally displaced persons, and others in need of protection. We stand resolute in our pledge to do our part in responding to the critical protection and assistance needs of the most vulnerable.