

Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme

Seventy-Fourth Session

National Statement

High Commissioner, Vice Chair, your excellencies, distinguished delegates.

With the terrible scenes from Saturday wretchedly etched in our memories, Australia takes this moment to unequivocally condemn the attacks on Israel by Hamas and expresses its deep condolences for the lives lost. As fighting continues, we urge restraint, the protection of civilians and the immediate release of all hostages.

We express too our solidarity to those affected by the earthquake in Afghanistan. The scenes from Herat show another truly undeserved devastation brought down on the people of Afghanistan.

Turning to today, Australia is pleased to align to statements delivered on behalf of MIKTA, the Group of Friends of the Charter on the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action, and the Group of Friends to the #IBelong Campaign to End Statelessness.

Australia acknowledges the tireless efforts of UNHCR staff to deliver crucial protection and humanitarian assistance to the rising number of displaced peoples globally. Thank you; your work is vital.

In the last twelve months, Australia has provided humanitarian assistance to more than twenty crises where the United Nations requested support. Our predictable and flexible core contribution of AUD25 million to UNHCR was supported by further contributions of AUD27.5 million in FY2022-23. This supported regional appeals from crises in the Horn of Africa and Sudan, to humanitarian need in Bangladesh and Myanmar.

Like others, we encourage new donors to come forward to support UNHCR's work. This requires a truly common global effort.

We hear refugee hosting states when they remind us – as they should – of the pressure they are under, and we remain deeply concerned by the significant funding gap facing UNHCR. The Global Refugee Forum later this year provides an opportunity to demonstrate that responsibility sharing must become a reality. Australia is committed to supporting refugee resettlement, complementary pathways, and assistance that supports refugee and host community resilience. We

have taken co-leadership roles in the Resettlement and Gender Equality, and the Protection from Gender-Based Violence pledges.

In June, Australia released its new international development policy. The policy focuses on supporting a peaceful, stable and prosperous Indo-Pacific while contributing to solutions to collective global challenges — meeting needs where they are most acute. The policy prioritises prevention and risk reduction; recognises climate change as a powerful driver of displacement; aims to address the root causes of crises; and aligns humanitarian, development, peacebuilding, diplomatic and security efforts.

For example - our response to the Rohingya crisis is a collective effort with our ASEAN and donor counterparts and the Government of Bangladesh to find durable solutions. As part of this focus, we call for accountability for human rights violations committed in Myanmar, while remaining steadfast in our commitment to providing humanitarian assistance to Rohingya and host communities in Bangladesh, and addressing needs in Myanmar.

Core to our international development policy is gender equality, social inclusion and locally-led action. Australia will continue to amplify the voices of the marginalised, advocating for inclusive, principled and effective humanitarian action for all.

Australia is also currently developing a humanitarian strategy. We will work together with partners, including UNHCR, to ensure this supports the Global Compact on Refugees.

Australia is committed to supporting humanitarian and settlement programs and recently announced up to 20,000 places in 2023-24, providing permanent resettlement for those most in need of protection. This represents Australia's largest intake in a decade.

In June, Australia assumed the Chair of the Consultations on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways and is committed to assisting states to establish and grow their refugee resettlement programs. We look forward to assuming the Chair of the Global Task Force on Refugee Labour Mobility in April 2024 and remain committed to enhancing community sponsorship and exploring education pathways.

We continue to advance meaningful refugee participation through the creation of a Refugee Advisory Panel to advise Government. We will be proud to include a refugee advisor in our delegation to the Global Refugee Forum, and future high-level meetings.

Thank you.