

**PLENARY**

**U.S. Delegation Statement**

**74th Session of the UNHCR Executive Committee**

**Delivered by Assistant Secretary of State Julieta Valls Noyes**

**U.S. Department of State**

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High Commissioner, Chair,

Before I begin, I must say that the United States unequivocally condemns the appalling attacks by Hamas terrorists against Israel. We stand in solidarity with the government and people of Israel and extend our condolences for the lives lost in these attacks.

Turning to the matter at hand; two months from now, we will reconvene here in Geneva for the second Global Refugee Forum. With global humanitarian aid budgets struggling to keep pace with global needs, we must use this time together to prioritize action and commit to new ways of working. My government has reached deep into our reserves to maintain our long history of humanitarian generosity. We are proud

to remain UNHCR's largest single country donor, providing more than \$1.8 billion in funding this past fiscal year alone.

We face increasingly complex and intractable humanitarian emergencies, however, and money alone is no longer enough. That's why we've launched several new initiatives to support refugees and stateless persons. I'd like to describe some of them today.

First, we are renewing American leadership on refugee resettlement. Refugee resettlement puts our highest values at the heart of our foreign policy. Our long, proud history of resettlement is a concrete demonstration of solidarity with refugees and the countries hosting them, and a beacon of hope for persecuted people around the world. We have been working hard to modernize the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program. This past year my country resettled refugees from every region in the world. Our monthly admissions are now nearing a pace that can support 125,000 refugee arrivals in the next year – a 30-year high. Our work to innovate and streamline our programs and policies demonstrates our ongoing commitment to refugees and stateless people everywhere.

These innovations include the launch of a new initiative, our Welcome Corps. Launched in January, the Welcome Corps is a private sponsorship program to empower everyday Americans to welcome refugees and support their resettlement and integration as they build new lives in the United States. From Venezuelans in need of international protection, to Sudanese displaced anew, to Rohingya refugees facing increased threats and dwindling assistance, to many others there is not time to list, I am proud that our citizens can now contribute directly to our life-saving and life-sustaining efforts.

Second, on the margins of the UN General Assembly High-Level week a few weeks ago, the United States joined the World Economic Forum to call on humanitarian and development organizations, donors and host governments, development finance institutions, foundations, investors, and corporations to join forces to mobilize \$10 billion in investment capital. That partnership will enable one thousand businesses to enter or scale up activities in fragile frontier markets, including many that host refugees, by 2030. This Call to Action forms the cornerstone of our efforts to innovate, to work with new partners, and to leverage diplomacy toward solutions to protracted humanitarian situations.

Third, we are looking at new ways to combine humanitarian and development financing to meet the needs of refugees and host communities. For example, we are partnering with Kenya, where some 600,000 refugees live in camps in two of the most remote and underdeveloped parts of the country. In both Kakuma and Dadaab, historic recurring drought and the mounting effects of climate change impact both displaced and host communities. Kenya's new refugee law and pending regulations provide an opening to see if we can, in fact, do business differently.

But let me be clear. Although we are partnering with the private sector, looking at innovative financing mechanisms, and concentrating on multilateral development bank reform, this is not an effort to scale down humanitarian aid from situations that need it. U.S. humanitarian assistance is NOT going away. There will always be acute humanitarian needs and we will continue to respond when needs are greatest. What we are doing is expanding the toolbox, the partnerships, and the approaches to meet growing needs in a changing environment.

This December, the United States will call on the Global Refugee Forum to look beyond traditional humanitarian donors and

organizations to a broader coalition of development agencies, private sector actors, civil society, and refugees themselves to respond to humanitarian and refugee crises more sustainably. We can no longer rely on 20<sup>th</sup> century solutions to 21<sup>st</sup> century problems. We need new approaches. I know – together – we can find them.

Finally, as part of our enduring commitment to empowering refugee voices, I would like to turn the microphone over briefly – as I did last year in this forum – to one of our delegates, Mohammed Naeem. Mohammed is the Chair of the United States Refugee Advisory Board, where he has led efforts to center refugee perspectives and expertise across global policymaking spaces. I am so proud to have him with us today and cede the rest of my time to him.

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**Mohammed Naeem, USDEL Refugee Representative**

**Plenary Remarks**

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Thank you, Assistant Secretary Noyes, for your steadfast commitment and bold leadership – in centering the voice of refugees.

Since the establishment of this Executive Committee in 1958, refugees have looked toward this body, and the broader humanitarian protection system, to realize a new beginning for their lives and families – one that guarantees protection, freedoms of speech and expression, and a pathway toward social and economic opportunity. In short, refugees seek to belong. This was the dream of my parents, who fled Afghanistan during the 1980s, and were later welcomed by the generosity of the United States.

On the United States Refugee Advisory Board, we strongly believe that embracing the leadership and lived expertise of refugees is mission-critical in addressing the multifaceted challenges of displaced populations worldwide. We stand ready to work with you and harness the unique perspectives of forcibly displaced people, to build a global system that meets the demands of our shared future, upholding the full spirit of this committee's founding.

Thank you, Chair.