



Statement by the Permanent Representative of **SLOVAKIA to the UN Office and other international organisations in Geneva, Ambassador Dušan MATULAY in the general debate of the 74th plenary session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme (9-13 October 2023)**

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Chair,

I align myself with the statement of the European Union and would like to make some additional national remarks.

At the outset I would like to thank Mr. Filippo Grandi, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees for his opening statement, and especially for his update on refugee matters pertaining to various refugee crises in which the UNHCR is involved in.

We stand in support of High Commissioner's call for increased international solidarity with refugees and host communities around the world. We fully concur with his assessment of the relationship between conflict and displacement as well as with his calls to address the climate emergency, promote good governance, invest in development, and protect human rights.

With so many desperate situations across the world and the highest forced displacement in recorded history, the work of the UNHCR is more necessary than ever. Slovakia is committed to continue to support the UN Refugee Agency in carrying out its important mandate.

Chair,

Although in smaller numbers, people forced to flee Ukraine keep coming to Slovakia in search of safety. Slovakia remains committed to support them. Since the onset of the Russian war in Ukraine, more than 1.7 million arrivals and around 130 thousand individuals applying for the temporary protection status were recorded in my country.

I would like to take this opportunity to again thank the UNHCR for its continued support aimed at complementing the government-led efforts, in particular by addressing any gaps in the provision of assistance and services to Ukrainian refugees in Slovakia.

We note with great concern that the UN expects the humanitarian situation in Ukraine to worsen further if the current trend of destruction and violence continues. In this regard, we welcome the planned winterization response of the UNHCR in Ukraine over the coming six months.

Chair,

We all agree that sustainable development is the best way to prevent crises – including displacement – from occurring. The Global Compact on Refugees explicitly links forced displacement to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. With only 10-20% of the global goals currently on track our leaders agreed last month in New York on the need to urgently accelerate progress toward the SDGs in the second half of their implementation. We – the international community must also do more to advance and support nationally-owned political solutions to enable refugees to return home in safety and dignity, in all cases.

Chair,

No one ever chose to be a refugee. Collective action, in which every country plays its part, is needed to protect and improve the lives of those who were forced to flee their homes. The upcoming 2nd Global Refugee Forum (GRF) in December this year will present another landmark opportunity to do so. Last week we held national consultations in preparations for the GRF. I want to conclude by saying that Slovakia will come to the Forum with the objective to give fresh support for the goals of the Global Compact on Refugees.

Thank you for your attention.