



**74<sup>th</sup> Plenary Session of UNHCR Executive  
Committee**

**Geneva, October 9 – 13, 2023**

**Agenda item 3) General Debate**

**Statement by Greece**

Thank you Madame Chair,  
High Commissioner,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Greece aligns itself with the Statement made by the  
European Union.

Allow me at the outset to express our deepest  
condolences to all those who have lost loved ones during  
the appalling escalation of violence in Israel and Gaza.  
Greece stands with Israel and its people and categorically  
condemns the atrocious terrorist attack which  
indiscriminately targeted civilians. We also express our  
condolences and solidarity to the people of Afghanistan.

Furthermore, we should all pause and consider that these  
events are taking place in the context of a wider surge in

violence globally, notably the illegal Russian invasion of Ukraine, the humanitarian tragedy in Nagorno Karabakh, which also demands our full attention, and the civil war in Sudan. All of these crises have severe humanitarian repercussions.

Let me now extend to the High Commissioner Greece's sincere appreciation for all the active support, guidance and expertise provided since 1952 by your Office in Athens as well as by the HQ here in Geneva.

Our cooperation produced tangible results and together we have implemented various projects with a view to supporting those in need. The UNHCR is gradually transferring the ownership of large scale programs pertaining, among other things, to accommodation, cash-based assistance and Unaccompanied Minors to Greece.

Furthermore, in the framework of the voluntary relocation program, implemented by the Greek Ministry of Migration and Asylum, with the support of and in cooperation with UNHCR and other stakeholders, more than 5.000 applicants and beneficiaries of international protection have been transferred so far to other EU Member States; and among them more than 1.300 unaccompanied minors.

Greece is fully cognizant of the ever-growing humanitarian needs worldwide and the multi-faceted challenges faced by the UNHCR from Sudan to Ukraine to Nagorno Karabakh. In this respect, scaling up humanitarian assistance and support remains a priority for the Greek Government.

Therefore, Greece remains engaged in supporting UNHCR's priorities and activities to protect and improve the lives of refugees and asylum seekers. In July 2023, Greece allocated 200.000 Euros as additional funding for the Project "Sport for Peace" in order to provide services to children with disabilities at the Abusliem Municipality sports stadium in Tripoli.

Further to the above, Greece stood by the Ukrainian people since the very beginning, providing humanitarian assistance both inside Ukraine as well as to Ukrainian refugees seeking a safe haven in neighboring countries. Greece reiterates the need to fully ensure Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence.

We have so far granted temporary protection status through speedy and simplified procedures to approximately 26.000 persons.

The temporary protection procedures provide the granting of a temporary residence permit, which authorizes the holder to have access to the labour market as well as to the benefits of the National Health System, to engage in activities such as educational opportunities for adults, vocational training and practical workplace experience.

We have also activated the National Mechanism for Detection and Protection of Unaccompanied Minors for the transfer of children to special emergency accommodation structures.

Furthermore, we follow with grave concern the latest developments in Lampedusa and the subsequent sharp increase in flows in the Central Mediterranean route. Unfortunately, smuggling networks still capitalize on human suffering, therefore there is an imperative need to crack down on these networks and dismantle this business model, thus protecting people from embarking on perilous journeys with tragic results.

As our Prime Minister stated in his speech at the UNGA just a few days ago «we need a whole – of route approach by raising awareness in countries of the risks stemming from the smuggling routes.» At the same time, we remain strong advocates of fostering legal pathways.

Ahead of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Global Refugee Forum, I would like to reaffirm our continuous engagement in this process through solid pledges focusing on burden and responsibility sharing, the social and economic inclusion of refugees as well as on unaccompanied minors. We support a “whole of society” approach with the active participation of all relevant stakeholders, including local administrations and civil society. Greece will be represented at the GRF, in December, by the Greek Minister of Migration and Asylum Mr. Dimitris Kairidis.

Thank you for your attention.