

Statement by the Republic of Poland in the general debate at the 74th session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme - UNHCR (Geneva, 9-13 October 2023)

Honourable High Commissioner, Mr. Chair, Distinguished Participants,

At the outset, let me express Poland's condolences to Israeli delegation on heinous terrorist attacks as well as to Afghani delegation on devastating earthquake that both took place last week.

Poland aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union.

My delegation thanks the High Commissioner for his comprehensive statement and for all efforts the UNHCR personnel undertakes on a daily basis to provide critical assistance to refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced, and stateless people. We share your assessment – and your anxiety – over increasing number of challenges, conflicts, crises, that result in the growing humanitarian needs.

In this respect, we commend steps that UNHCR has undertaken in order to address these challenges, to broaden the scope of partners and to tackle funding gaps in operations around the world. We do hope that the internal reforms and planning will contribute to the UNHCR's continued independence, integrity, efficiency, transparency and professionalism in delivering humanitarian aid.

Mr High Commissioner, distinguished Delegates,

Since more than 1,5 year my country - confronted with an unprecedented situation stemming from brutal, unprovoked and unjustifiable Russian aggression against Ukraine – has become not only a donor, but also a hosting country for a one of the largest Ukrainian community of refugees. This effort has been carried both on all levels of administration as well as a society as a whole. As a result, not a single refugee camp has been established in Poland.

Currently, we host around 1 million Ukrainians. Practically since day one of Russian aggression Poland has effectively implemented horizontal solutions allowing for their quick integration. Thanks to swift adoption of legal provisions nearly 1.6 million Ukrainians were granted Polish Personal Identity Number and take advantage of the same public services (schools, health care, social benefits), on par with Polish nationals. 180 000 Ukrainian children and 400 Ukrainian teachers are part of our education system. Additionally about 25 000 are part of higher education. We are supporting professional activation of mothers of children who have not started school by providing extra day-care and children facilities and well as those who moved their businesses from Ukraine.

Apart from aid to Ukrainians present in Poland, the Polish government is also delivering humanitarian aid directly in Ukraine. We provide assistance to health sector and also to internally displaced Ukrainians by constructing temporary housing towns for 20 000 IDP's in various locations. Additionally, from November 2022 mobile medical units are being opened countrywide. Overall Polish costs for humanitarian assistance to Ukraine so far has been extremely high, reaching over 11 billion EUR - which is 2 % of Poland's GDP.

Soon international humanitarian community will witness the third year of the war in Ukraine. As we are shifting from the first phase of humanitarian crisis to another – adaptation and integration - and we are facing another winter, I would like to commend UNHCR's response and engagement – be it *via* regional bureau in Warsaw that closely cooperates with the government and voivodeships, be it by ongoing cooperation with municipalities, NGO's and other UN agencies in preparation of the Regional Refugee Response Plan.

Mr High Commissioner,

Despite carrying significant financial and organisational burden in addressing the above-mentioned precarious situation and arising humanitarian needs, Poland has always presented multi-threaded and geographically diverse engagement. Over the last few years we have been taking a multi-track approach by making donations to mitigate effects of humanitarian crises in Syria, Sudan, Jordan, Lebanon, Yemen and most recently – Armenia, a country that hosts unprecedented number of refugees *vis a vis* its population. On top of that, Poland has been active in providing bilateral and urgent humanitarian assistance in kind.

Rest assured, Mr. High Commissioner, that Polish engagement and support for you and your Office will endure in the years to come.

I thank you.