

74th Session of UNHCR Executive Committee

**General Debate: Statement by H.E. Mr. Mohammad Sufiur Rahman,
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh
(10 October 2022)**

**Madam Vice Chair,
High Commissioner Mr. Grandi,
Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,**

We thank the High Commissioner for his report that provides us with an insightful account of the global displacement situation. We note his reference to cultural war, political violence, natural disasters and climate change as well as economic reasons as drivers for displacements. We also appreciate his vision and pronounced commitment to steer the UNHCR's work to address the challenges refugees and other displaced people are faced with .

The emergence of new conflicts is worsening the refugee situation worldwide with a staggering number of additional people feeling the need to move and seek international protection. Climate induced forced displacements are taking greater share in the global refugee stock and internally displaced persons category. In order to effectively respond to such challenges, there must be strengthened efforts by all concerned, particularly the countries of origin, to address root causes of forced displacement and to create conducive environment for safe, voluntary and sustainable return.

Developing countries have been bearing the brunt of hosting refugees and in many cases, protracted refugee situations are seriously undermining host countries' efforts towards peace and development. Responding to refugee situation and internal displacements are becoming further compounded by the debilitating impacts of COVID-19 pandemic and Russia-Ukraine war when we

confront dwindling funding with less unearmarked commitments. In this backdrop, enhanced international cooperation and assistance to refugees, concrete demonstration of global solidarity founded on the principle of equitable burden- and responsibility- sharing become even more important. However, these will be difficult to realise if associated countries and the UNHCR are found to be deficient in their focus on durable solutions. It is important that the UNHCR maintains primacy to building partnerships and coalitions towards creating conditions for voluntary return.

Madam Vice Chair,

Bangladesh has been hosting around 1.2 million forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals for the last six years on humanitarian grounds. Despite many challenges and resource constraints, we are providing them with necessary humanitarian assistance. We have established 6,000 learning centers to provide primary and secondary education for the Rohingyas in their own mother language along with undertaking various capacity building initiatives. In the face of congestion in refugee camps in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh has built spacious camps with necessary facilities in Bhashan Char with the option to rehabilitate around 100,000 Rohingyas. We expect international support to improve conditions further and to create livelihood options there.

However, it is a matter of utmost concern to witness continued funding gap in the UN's humanitarian response - the Joint Response Plan (JRP) for the Rohingyas. According to the latest report, this JRP has been funded only 34 per cent, leading to a 33 per cent reduction in food rations in the first half of the year. We urge all the Member States, donors, different stakeholders to immediately redouble their contribution to realize the JRP fully, sustain it till the Rohingya return to Rakhine voluntarily, in safety and dignity.

Madam Vice Chair,

Prolonged stay of the Rohingya in Cox's Bazar has already threatened social cohesion, environmental and ecological parity, economical viability, and political stability in the area. There is a growing tendency of criminal activities among some Rohingya in the camps, perhaps for waning hopes for an early return and the resultant despair. A real risk of the rise of radicalisation and violent extremism among them may undermine regional stability.

Rohingya crisis originated in Myanmar and its solution lies there. The operationalisation of their right to return can be the starting point for securing their basic rights and gradual integration into the Myanmar society with rights associated with citizenship. In the recent time, we note keen interest on part of Myanmar authorities in accepting the displaced Rohingyas back to their ancestral land in Rakhine. China as a neighbour has remained engaged in facilitating such a repatriation exercise.

A pilot repatriation scheme thus has been conceived. A "come and tell visit" by Myanmar authorities to brief prospective returnees of the arrangements made for their resettlement in northern Rakhine has taken place. A 'Go and See Visit', by Rohingya representatives to the Rakhine State has been conducted to allow them to see conditions there to assist them to make informed choices on voluntary return. UNHCR will be duly associated with the ascertaining voluntariness of prospective returnees.

We strongly feel that greater humanitarian access, early closure of IDP camps, investments in livelihood options and programmes for resettlement in Rakhine *inter alia* can help create better conditions and greater confidence for return. We call on interested international partners, regional countries and concerned UN agencies to play assistive role within their respective mandates to facilitate voluntary return. We specifically urge UNHCR to step up its activities

in Rakhine State to support voluntary repatriation and build resilience among communities .

Madam Vice Chair,

We are going through a period of extreme nationalism in which negative stereotyping of refugees and migrants are becoming an agenda for whipping up emotions for divisive politics. Integrity of the institution of asylum and international protection is coming under greater pressures. In this context, securing access to rights to the marginalised and vulnerable communities in host countries as well as securing the right of return of the displaced and the refugees to their countries of origin in dignity and safety become important. These could be further reflected upon during the forthcoming Global Refugee Forum for repronouncing our strong humanitarian spirit and for making necessary pledges.

I thank you.

[Word count:935, Speaking time: 6 minutes]