

**DIP DIRECTOR, Elizabeth Tan – Presentation of the NOTE ON
INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION
90TH MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE, 1-3 July 2024**

Madam Chair,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my honor to present to you today the 2024 Note on International Protection, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees' annual overview of the state of international protection worldwide. I am particularly glad to do so after we have heard the Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, who has highlighted not only the significant challenges facing states, UNHCR and individuals who are forcibly displaced or stateless - but also expressed UNHCR's confidence that the international legal framework protecting their rights remains strong, and that given the will to work together effectively at international level, the challenges can be met.

The Note highlights the critical need to abide by international legal standards and to fulfil the commitments enshrined in the Global Compact on Refugees - as a major, collective effort in pursuit of the shared goal of protection and solutions for the forcibly displaced. Persecution and conflicts continue to force record numbers of people from their homes, including in many contexts where peace and solutions remain elusive. The challenges of ensuring protection and solutions for forcibly displaced people are compounded in mixed movements - involving refugees and migrants, as well as in contexts impacted by climate change and disaster.

The Note recalls the relevance of UNHCR’s core protection mandate to contemporary displacement challenges and underscores the importance of partnerships to address their magnitude and complexity. It is a crucial responsibility of States, UNHCR’s partners and all stakeholders to leverage UNHCR’s protection leadership role and to recognize the full scope of refugee definitions and human rights-based concepts for the protection of displaced and stateless persons.

With too few political solutions to ongoing and new conflicts, the Note recalls that protection needs have grown exponentially over the past 12 months, while humanitarian responses remain insufficient. In the short term, life-saving needs must be prioritized - but insufficient funding can affect longer-term solutions strategies, and community-based and resilience-building interventions, jeopardizing prospects for inclusion in national systems and economies, as well as solutions to displacement. Development investments benefiting both displaced and host communities need to be made more swiftly, widely, and systematically.

The Note recalls the positive efforts of many States that have worked to reinforce the capacity of their asylum systems to deliver fair and efficient procedures. This includes: through use of prima facie approaches or temporary protection schemes, and the use of digital technology for registration and documentation. Courts around the world have continued to render important decisions, upholding the rights of displaced and stateless persons, and adhering to UNHCR guidance.

However, restrictive policies and practices threaten to undermine collective international efforts to safeguard the right to asylum and achieve protection and solutions. These practices include refoulement, arbitrary expulsions and mass deportations, large-scale pushbacks, non-entry measures at borders, and attempts to shift protection

responsibilities elsewhere. It is also worrisome that there continue to be reports of persons seeking asylum facing legal and practical barriers to protection, in some cases due lack of access to asylum systems and due to discrimination.

When protection and solutions are not realized, and rights are not accessible, forcibly displaced, and stateless people may feel compelled to undertake dangerous journeys exposing them to heightened protection risks. In response to the challenges of mixed and onward movements, a route-based approach, involving a comprehensive set of humanitarian, development, solutions and rights-based interventions by States, UNHCR, IOM and others, in countries of origin, countries of asylum, transit and destination can provide a viable way forward. A route-based approach seeks to help refugees and migrants find access to relevant protection and assistance, access to solutions, and legal pathways at the earliest possible stage, thereby reducing human suffering. It should also help all states along the routes to manage mixed and onward movements in an efficient, effective, and lawful manner, based on the kind of collaboration and responsibility sharing that underpins the Global Compact on Refugees.

Building on the progress already made, the High Commissioner has emphasized the need to move more robustly towards wider inclusion of displaced and stateless persons in national systems and services. This key objective again links efforts for refugees and hosting countries to the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and the responsibility-sharing imperative.

Allow me to highlight a few key operational developments:

- Child protection has been enhanced in some displacement situations where UNHCR and partners have established strengthened specialized child protection services. UNHCR has provided children with age-appropriate information about their rights and services, and made space for their voices to be heard, and to influence decisions affecting them.
- Gender-based violence remains a major global protection concern. Displaced and stateless women and girls are disproportionately affected, with one in five refugee women subjected to sexual violence. Together with partners, UNHCR is working to strengthen national systems for preventing and responding to gender-based violence, and UNHCR has deployed GBV expertise from the onset of numerous emergencies.
- UNHCR has repeatedly expressed its concerns about the insufficiency of solutions to displacement. To facilitate voluntary repatriation, the Note calls for more support to governments in their efforts to create conducive conditions and commit to sustainable returnee reintegration.

Despite the expansion of resettlement opportunities and complementary pathways – thanks in part to the catalytic effect of the GRF pledging process - more efforts are needed for more refugees to benefit from third-country solutions. As a vital protection tool, more countries are called upon to make available more resettlement places.

Recognizing the progress made on complementary pathways – including facilitated access for refugees to skills-based, humanitarian and sponsorship schemes as well as family reunification – these efforts need to be scaled up. *On this issue, we will be hearing later from the EXCOM Rapporteur. She will present the Oral update on the EXCOM conclusion on the theme of durable solutions and complementary pathways.*

The Note on International Protection recalls the vital importance of strategic partnerships – which include States, UN agencies, civil society including refugee-led organizations – in furthering protection and solutions.

Statelessness and internal displacement – which are also discussed in the Note – will be separately presented along with the dedicated conference room papers tabled before the Committee.

To conclude – the Note underscores how UNHCR’s mandate, and its supervisory function, which have evolved over time, are more important than ever to safeguard the centrality of protection and expand protection space, including in refugee settings, internal displacement situations as well as when addressing statelessness.

Thank you for this opportunity to present on these key protection challenges and opportunities, and I look forward to your responses.