

STATEMENT OF THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE  
REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA MR. VAHAN KOSTANYAN  
AT THE UNHCR 75<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Geneva, October 15, 2024

Distinguished High Commissioner,  
Excellences,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

This session takes place at a particularly challenging time. We continue to witness the proliferation of crises and armed conflicts with grave humanitarian consequences. We are particularly concerned with the growing number of refugees and displaced people, in particular as a result of the conflict in the Middle East.

Dear colleagues,

Unfortunately, Armenia was not spared from the challenges caused by the influx of refugees. Over the past year, Armenia has faced unprecedented challenges and made great efforts to meet the needs of a large number of forcibly displaced population.

115,000 people who found refuge in Armenia were forcibly displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh as a result of ethnic cleansing in September 2023. We appreciate UNHCR's continued efforts to alleviate dire humanitarian needs and work on the ground, as it did in Armenia to support forcibly displaced people. Armenia is looking forward to continuing this cooperation.

It was a huge responsibility for a small landlocked country to host more than a hundred thousand people in a few days.

The sheer scale of this crisis is staggering. Among the refugees that have arrived in Armenia, more than 30,000 were children. Many refugees were from vulnerable groups—pregnant women, the elderly, people with disabilities, and those suffering from chronic conditions. The government has made every effort to find resources to provide adequate funding to address the humanitarian emergency.

Despite the fact that Armenia has been able to overcome the emergency phase of this unprecedented humanitarian crisis, additional efforts are needed to address the medium and long-term needs of refugees, ensuring their socio-economic rights, housing,

employment opportunities and creation of sustainable livelihoods. The Government of Armenia designs its policies in the spirit of sustainable programming also to fit in humanitarian-peace-development nexus.

Armenia has made significant voluntary commitments at Global Refugee Forum 2023 to support refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh in the medium and long term. There has already been progress in securing international support and implementing key aspects of these pledges, including collaboration with the UNHCR to address immediate needs and develop medium- and long-term solutions. The Government constantly evaluates progress in meeting its voluntary commitments.

It is clear that work should be continued until a durable solution is found, with the understanding that it is important to make refugees less dependent on humanitarian assistance and therefore less vulnerable. In this regard, along with humanitarian assistance, implementation of development programs has become a priority for the Government, and in this sense, the assistance of international organizations and donor countries is crucial.

Mr./Mme. Chair,

Throughout its history Armenia has hosted a considerable number of refugees and has taken all possible measures in order to empower them and provide with access to civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. Even now, despite a very difficult situation, Armenia hosts refugees from different parts of the world.

Armenia has developed respective legal and normative basis to provide refugee protection in the country. We recognize the value and untapped potential of refugees and displaced population, their power of integration and contribution to all aspects of our public life. Armenia reaffirms its unwavering commitment to ensuring the safety and dignity of the refugees who have sought shelter within our borders.

Mr./Mme. Chair,

Many times, from different UN platforms and forums, Armenia has drawn attention to the vulnerability of people living in conflict zones, calling their protection by upholding the principles of international law. We are convinced that gross violations of international human rights and international humanitarian law are a major cause of mass exoduses.

Armenia is of the strongest opinion that we all, as member States of the United Nations, have a duty to take decisive measures towards developing early warning and, more importantly, early action mechanisms to prevent forced displacement. The cost of a late or delayed response to these signals of trouble is lives and suffering of the innocent people.

Thank you.