

**75th Session of the UNHCR Executive Committee
Geneva, 14-18 October 2024**

Statement by the Government of Finland

**Delivered by H.E. Ms. Heidi Schroderus-Fox,
Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Finland, Geneva**

Chair, High Commissioner, Excellencies,

First, let me express our condolences over the tragic death of two UNHCR employees in Lebanon in September. Finland unequivocally condemns attacks against humanitarian workers. The international community must step up its efforts to ensure the safety of humanitarian work.

We have great respect for UNHCR employees, and all aid workers, including volunteers, working in increasingly dangerous environments, often risking their own lives. Their work is invaluable.

Finland aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the EU and its Member States.

The number of on-going conflicts is the highest since the Cold War. Many civilians in Gaza, Lebanon, Myanmar, Sudan, Ukraine and elsewhere have no choice but to flee. The number of forcibly displaced persons has reached unprecedented heights. We pay tribute to host countries and communities showing solidarity to refugees despite their own challenges. They deserve greater support by the international community.

As the gap between humanitarian needs and resources grows, we welcome UNHCR's sustainable programming approach. It focuses on partnerships with development actors, financing institutions and the private sector in protracted settings, and thus contributes to directing resources to more acute humanitarian crises. Efforts to prioritize and to seek efficiency and synergies with other UN agencies are more important than ever.

It is clear we need new approaches to challenges in refugee hosting countries. As a co-lead of the Global School Meal Coalition, Finland sees school feeding systems as one excellent means to promote food security, school enrollment and learning results also in displacement contexts. We have contributed over 14 millions Euros to ensure that children, including refugee children, in countries including Lebanon, Ethiopia and Kenya can receive meals at school. By now over 100 countries, including many host

countries, have joined the Coalition. We invite the UNHCR to be engaged in this work as part of its cooperation with WFP.

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions. Unfortunately, non-compliance with international humanitarian law (IHL) in conflicts is increasing and challenges to humanitarian access have grown in urgency. We must increase our efforts to enhance respect for IHL and protection of civilians. The 1951 Geneva Convention on the status of refugees has an instrumental role in protecting the civilians displaced due to, among others, IHL violations. Finland appreciates UNHCR's role as a guardian of international refugee law globally.

Finland, on its part, continues to support the national resettlement programme. We promote employment and integration of immigrants with various means, for example by promoting language learning and participation of under-represented groups in working life such as immigrant women. Also civil society actors and volunteers have a crucial role in engaging and empowering refugees in their new home countries.

For Finland, supporting and advocating for disability inclusion in humanitarian action is at the heart of principled humanitarian action and helping persons most in need. We appreciate UNHCR's commitment and activities seeking to ensure that assistance reaches persons with disabilities, in line with the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy. However, much remains to be done especially in integrating disability inclusion into formal humanitarian coordination mechanisms and improving disability inclusion at the country level.

Finland is UNHCR's long-standing supporter. Last year marked a record year with our support amounting to nearly 36 million Euros. We were one of the top donors supporting UNHCR's response in Sudan and the region. Further, last year, over 80% of our total funding was flexible in line with our commitment to quality funding. In closing, we wish to reassure the High Commissioner of Finland's continued support to UNHCR's crucial work also in the future.

Thank you.