

75th Session of UNHCR ExCoM 14-18 October 2024

Intervention by The Kingdom of The Netherlands

Thank you chair,

The Netherlands aligns itself with the statement of the EU and its member states.

We would like to thank the High Commissioner for his powerful opening statement yesterday: a fair and frank statement that forces all of us in this room to look in the mirror and to reflect on ourselves, as countries, and as member states. High Commissioner, I hear your message that we should not only focus on our own borders. And I hear your call to governments, to not make reactive and shortsighted decisions, but rather to look upstream. We acknowledge these messages, and we will take them back home. Thank you.

Chair, we all agree that the growing number of forcibly displaced people and humanitarian needs significantly outstrips current levels of funding and support. And we all agree that this situation is unsustainable, costly, and it puts a huge burden on the shoulders of host countries, communities and forcibly displaced persons. There is a Dutch saying that perfectly captures this dilemma. It literally translates as follows: “we are mopping the floor, with the tap still running.”

We commend the efforts by the High Commissioner and his team to address this issue systematically by putting the concept of sustainable programming high on the agenda. The Netherlands fully supports this potentially historic transformation of UNHCR’s way of working.

5 years ago, as one of the first donors, the Netherlands redirected its predictable, multi-annual development funding into refugee responses, including to UNHCR. The vehicle for this is the PROSPECTS Partnership, which brings together humanitarian and development actors in support of 8 hosting countries, to build self-reliance and resilience of forcibly displaced persons. We have renewed, and even significantly increased, our financial commitment last year at the Global Refugee Forum.

Chair, please allow me to make 3 points regarding sustainable programming:

First of all, the Netherlands sees sustainable programming as a blueprint for how UNHCR works jointly with development actors, national governments, international financial institutions and civil society, without increasing its own operational footprint in development spaces. As mentioned, our PROSPECTS Partnership is a material expression of our support for this approach, with an

understanding that this funding should enable such collaboration - based on complementarity of mandates and expertise. We welcome more clarity on how UNHCR sees the relation between multiannual funding and sustainable programming.

Secondly, acknowledging the various political and operational complexities of many displacement contexts, the Netherlands still believes that we should strive to ensure that the coordination of development responses to forced displacement lies – wherever and whenever possible – with the national governments of the host countries.

Thirdly, we hope that we can all build on the experiences of countries such as Colombia, Moldova, Ethiopia, Uganda or Kenya where UNHCR has already been adjusting its role towards the national government and development actors, in the spirit of the sustainable programming approach. The donor community must remain committed to supporting these processes.

Chair, let me continue with some reflections on the route-based approach for mixed movements. The Netherlands highly values this 360 degrees approach, ranging from protection where needed to return where possible. For us, it is important that the approach enables us to intervene and look for durable solutions as early as possible, to avoid unnecessary suffering and problems along the routes. We welcome and support the remarks of the High Commissioner that interagency cooperation in the implementation of this approach is crucial, especially with the IOM.

Lastly, the Netherlands welcomes UNHCR's first Strategic Framework to better integrate diversity, equity and inclusion into every aspect of its operations and in the workplace. The recently achieved gender parity is a significant step forward in this regard. Because only when everyone at UNHCR feels valued and respected, UNHCR's staff can make a difference themselves.

I thank you chair