

75. session of the Executive Committee of the UNHCR

Statement by the Republic of Poland

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Honourable High Commissioner, Madam Chair, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, we find ourselves at a critical moment in history, facing an unprecedented global refugee crisis that demands our unwavering attention. Poland applauds UNHCR's tireless efforts to improve the lives of over 120 million refugees worldwide.

As we convene for the 75th Session of the UNHCR Executive Committee, we stand at a crossroads. The scale of displacement is rising, yet our collective efforts to prevent and resolve conflicts remain insufficient in the face of persisting humanitarian emergencies. We need a comprehensive and lasting strategy to address this situation, one of a collective and single-minded nature.

Poland has been at the forefront of the humanitarian response to the crisis caused by the brutal and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine by the Russian regime, supported by Belarus. This invasion has not only threatened Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity but also unleashed an unprecedented massive influx of suffering that extends far beyond its borders.

Poland, too, stands as a testament to the power of compassion, solidarity and action. Since February 2022, we have opened our doors to millions of Ukrainian refugees. We have provided them not only with shelter and aid but, more importantly, a chance to rebuild their lives with dignity and hope. Ukrainians have the same access to social services, education and professional development as Polish citizens.

We cannot overstate the importance of the international community's response to this tragedy. We have seen decisive action being taken in all corners of the world, such as the European Union's decision to activate the Temporary Protection Directive for the first time in its history. This vital instrument, implemented immediately in the wake of the invasion, provided over 6 million Ukrainians with the legal protection and support they so urgently needed.

Distinguished delegates, aiding Ukrainian refugees is not only a humanitarian act. It is also a resolute condemnation of Russian aggression. Ukrainians continue to defend their country, spilling their blood for their right to freedom and self-determination.

As winter approaches in Ukraine, we must be firm and resolute. The coming months could bring freezing temperatures and new influx of missile strikes. By targeting critical

infrastructure, private houses and apartments, hospitals and kindergartens, they put thousands of lives at risk. As the international community, we need to make sure that Ukraine has the necessary support to withstand these circumstances. We must stand ready to provide immediate help, rebuild and reinforce their energy infrastructure. We cannot allow innocent civilians to freeze.

Poland stands firmly with Ukraine to all possible ends, making necessary preparations for a potential new influx of war refugees. We must assist those who may once again be forced to flee.

Distinguished delegates, we gather here today not just as representatives of our respective states, but also as individuals. We are decision-makers as we are witnesses. Therefore, we cannot distance ourselves from the unfolding atrocities and humanitarian tragedies. As we speak, the situation in the Middle East is escalating and demands our urgent attention and action. We must continue to provide necessary assistance to all regions affected by the conflicts, seeing not just statistics and numbers but the individual lives at stake.

Poland has transformed from a nation of emigrants to one that receives large number of immigrants and refugees. We learned how difficult it is to balance national interests with international and humanitarian obligations. Despite the complexity, Poland has consistently fulfilled its commitment to global security and solidarity. Our support has extended far beyond our borders, as we have channelled our resources to reduce the suffering caused by conflicts and crises in Syria, Sudan, Jordan, Lebanon, Yemen, Armenia and beyond. Poland stands firmly in solidarity with those in need.

Distinguished delegates, excellencies – Poland once again applauds the courage and dedication of all UNHCR's humanitarian workers, who risk their lives daily to alleviate human suffering globally. Their work is more critical than ever.

However, to hesitate now would not only embolden those who seek to destroy peace and stability, but it would betray the very values we, as the global community, are sworn to protect.

Thank you.