

75th Session of UNHCR Executive Committee

General Debate: Statement by H.E. Mr. Tareq Md Arifiul Islam, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh (16 October 2024)

**Madam Chair, High Commissioner Mr. Grandi,
Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,**

We thank the High Commissioner for his thoughtful and poignant opening statement on the global forced displacement scenario. We pay our tribute to the UNHCR staff who lost their lives in the line of duty and condemn this. We are encouraged by the pledges and commitments made in the second Global Refugee Forum, particularly the announcement of 47 multistakeholder pledges to galvanize the work of UNHCR to ensure sustainable humanitarian assistance to refugees and to bring forth durable solutions to the underlying crises. The next step will be immediate implementation of those pledges and having an evaluation of the impacts of implementation upon the refugees, asylum seekers and other persons of concern to UNHCR.

The emergence of new conflicts as well as long-standing refugee crisis are worsening the refugee situation worldwide with an unprecedented scale of people fleeing their homes and seeking international protection. While this year marks the 75th anniversary of the Geneva Convention 1949, we are encountering horrific accounts of violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law across the world.

Madam Chair,

Alarming, climate-induced forced displacements are taking larger share in the global refugee stock and the internally displaced persons category. The recurrence and intensity of extreme weather and climate events are growing faster than ever. In this context, we can recall the devastating impacts of hurricane Helene and Milton in the USA; recent floods in Europe; Typhoon Yagi in Southeast Asia which left six million children helpless and insecure; catastrophic and massive floods in Bangladesh that affected over 18 million people including the Rohingyas, to name a few. In 2022, 84

per cent of refugees and asylum seekers fled from highly climate-vulnerable countries. At the same time, a significant percentage of forcibly displaced and stateless people are living in the most climate-vulnerable situations in the world lacking access to environmentally sustainable resources and resilience to the impacts of climate change. Amid these worrisome developments, the High Commissioner's emphasis on the Strategic Plan for Climate Action 2024-2030 to accelerate advocacy for protection and solutions for these people is something reassuring.

Developing countries have been bearing the brunt of hosting majority of global refugees and in many cases, protracted refugee situations are seriously undermining their efforts towards development. In this backdrop, enhanced international cooperation and concrete demonstration of global solidarity as enshrined in the Global Compact for Refugees (GCR) through the overarching principle of equitable burden- and responsibility- sharing, have become even more important.

Providing adequate humanitarian assistance and protection to this record number of forcibly displaced people would be impossible if associated countries and UNHCR are found to be deficient in their focus on durable solutions. Addressing root causes is highly imperative in this context. It is important that the UNHCR maintains primacy to build strategic partnerships with relevant stakeholders including international financial institutions and development partners.

Madam Chair,

Bangladesh has been hosting around 1.2 million forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals, Rohingyas, for the last seven years on humanitarian grounds. 32 thousands new born are being added additionally to this number every year. On top of this, more than 30 thousand Rohingyas have recently entered into our territory fleeing recent escalation of conflict in the Rakhine State. They are a glaring example of statelessness. Despite many constraints and our humble capacity, we are providing them with necessary humanitarian assistance including primary and secondary education. Besides, we have built from our own resources spacious camps with modern facilities in a place alled Bhashan Char to rehabilitate around 100,000 Rohingyas. We expect concerted international support to create, in addition to our efforts, ample livelihood options there.

Madam Chair,

Prolonged stay of the Rohingyas has already threatened social cohesion, and environmental and ecological balances in Cox's Bazar where the camps are located. Mentionable, criminal activities are seen among some Rohingyas over taking control in the camps, which is an ominous signal to our national security.

Rohingya crisis originated in Myanmar and the solution lies there. The realisation of their right to return can be the starting point for securing their basic rights and gradual integration into the Myanmar society. In the recent time, we have noted the keen interest of Myanmar authorities in accepting the displaced Rohingyas back to Rakhine. The effort of UNHCR in ascertaining voluntariness of prospective returnees is appreciated.

We call on interested international partners, regional countries including ASEAN and concerned UN agencies to play assistive role within their mandates to help create better conditions in Rakhine and promote greater confidence among Rohingyas for return to their home country. We specifically urge UNHCR to step up its activities in Rakhine State to support voluntary repatriation and build resilience among communities.

In this context, we are heartened by the High Commissioner's continued focus and reflection on the Rohingya crisis and his very useful exchange on the sideline of UNGA with the Chief Adviser of the Interim Govt in Bangladesh Prof. Muhammad Yunus.

Madam Chair,

During this precarious time, traditional humanitarian assistance and protection regime will be ineffective for refugees who are at high risk of exposure to disastrous climate effects and natural calamities. In this backdrop, we appreciate the launch of UNHCR's Climate Resilience Fund for enhancing adaptation and resilience of both forcibly displaced people and their host communities.

In conclusion, we appeal to the international community to establish a separate global climate fund only dedicated for the refugee situations. This would help alleviate the plight of the refugees that are most vulnerable to climate change and environmental degradation. It will also be a timely initiative to complement the 'Sustainable Programming' of UNHCR.

I thank you.

[Word count:867, Speaking time: 5-6 minutes]