

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY!

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Agenda item 3 General debate

STATEMENT BY BULGARIA

Distinguished Chairperson,
High Commissioner Grandi,
Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Bulgaria aligns with the statement of the EU and its Member States. At the ExCom meeting last year and even the years before, here in the Palais des Nations, all **we shared the same concern** about the unprecedented levels of violence and human suffering around the world, the disregard for human rights, the violations of international humanitarian law. We all pledged to contribute and join efforts to reverse these trends. Today, having heard Your address to us, High Commissioner, we note with even greater concern that not only the trends have not been reversed, but we even haven't maintained the status quo and the numbers of forcibly displaced persons are continuing to grow.

Russia's ongoing war of aggression in Ukraine, the deepening humanitarian and security crises in Gaza and Lebanon, the situations in Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Afghanistan and Syria continue to raise serious concerns and to challenge the international community and its ability to prevent and respond adequately to the consequences. The spill-over effect of the unfolding crisis to neighbouring countries, who were already hosting many forcibly displaced persons need immediate action.

We join others and we call for immediate and focussed action **to address the root causes of forced displacement, full respect for the human rights and humanitarian law and principles and provision of access for humanitarian aid and relief in a secure and sustainable manner.** *We would like to use this forum to express our deepest condolences to all those who have lost loved ones at the ongoing conflicts, including to the families of **the two UNHCR staff members who lost their life in Lebanon last month.***

The UNHCR is not a peacebuilding unit, nor a development or climate change agency, but **UNHCR's protection-oriented assessment on the ground and from the perspective of its persons of concern** is important in sensitizing the international response and solidarity, and we greatly value UNHCR's expertise.

We commend UNHCR for its determined efforts in finding workable solutions for effective, predictable and timely emergency preparedness and response to the continuing increase of protracted and newly surging humanitarian and refugee situations in 2024 and we welcome the UNHCR's new policy on emergency preparedness and response in this regard.

The Global Refugee Forum last year was an opportunity to take stock of our efforts and identify gaps in our joint and national actions and reflect on potential pragmatic approaches that will make a real difference on the ground and in the lives of refugees and their host communities. We believe that in three years we will be able to say that we have made progress in making proof of our solidarity.

Being a host country and understanding the challenges that go with this, **Bulgaria will continue standing in solidarity with refugee hosting countries.** We are pleased to recall our new pledge made at the Second Refugee Forum last year with regard to the increase of the number of resettled persons in Bulgaria. **In 2023 the Republic of Bulgaria joined the resettlement mechanism. So far, 94 Syrian citizens have been resettled in our country from the Republic of Turkey. Another 25 Syrian citizens are planned to be resettled by the end of 2024. For 2025 the resettlement quota of Syrian citizens will be doubled.**

Bulgaria welcomes the adoption by consensus of this year's **ExCom Conclusions** on durable solutions and complementary pathways and thank the UNHCR facilitators and the Rapporteur –Uganda for their work.

Bulgaria welcomes the commitment of the UNHCR to continue addressing in its assistance the concerns of **persons in vulnerable situations**, especially **children**, women and girls and **persons with disabilities**, and to pursue inclusive protection as well as search for innovative solutions for the millions of refugees, IDPs and stateless persons.

We would like to inform in that regard, that a project named "Creating alternative solutions for comprehensive social care services for unaccompanied refugee children in Bulgaria" has been drafted by the Bulgarian State Agency for Refugees. The project is focused on the specific needs of the refugee children and their full inclusion in the community outside the reception centers of the Agency and comprises three phases, aimed respectively at (first) continuing the support, through specialized care for unaccompanied refugee children including the construction of a third "Safe Zone" for their accommodation; (second) building teams of specialists to help children in the transition to alternative care; children and young people will be included in the decision-

making process as well; (third) building a network of places for alternative care for unaccompanied refugee children on municipalities level.

View of the funding gap announced, let me reassure you, High Commissioner, in Bulgaria's continued financial contribution to the UNHCR activities in support of hosting states , **refugee protection and in view of enabling durable solutions.**

Finally, Bulgaria remains committed to the efforts to end statelessness globally. We commend Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan for their successes in ending the known cases of statelessness on their territories as well as Kenya for the progress achieved so far.

Thank you.