



AUSTRALIAN MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

E-mail [UN.Geneva@dfat.gov.au](mailto:UN.Geneva@dfat.gov.au)

Chemin des Fins 2, Petit Saconnex, 1211 Geneva 19 Ph +41 22 799 9100 Fax +41 22 799 9175 [www.geneva.mission.gov.au](http://www.geneva.mission.gov.au)

**Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme**  
**Seventy-Second Session**  
**National Statement**

High Commissioner, Chair, your excellencies, distinguished delegates.

High Commissioner, thank you for your Statement to the Executive Committee.

Recognising the 70th anniversary of the adoption of the Refugee Convention, Australia would first like to acknowledge the tireless efforts of UNHCR staff globally, who continue to deliver protection to those most in need, and in operating environments that are more challenging now than ever before.

Australia continues to stand with UNHCR to assist those in need of protection within the framework of the Global Compact on Refugees.

We know the impacts of global displacement have been compounded significantly by the global pandemic and the ongoing challenges of COVID-19. The pandemic has further impacted humanitarian access and exacerbated resource constraints, increased protection risks for women and girls, and will lead to long-term socioeconomic impact. We expect COVID-19 will continue to challenge protection responses globally for some time.

High Commissioner, we agree that ensuring equitable access to vaccines to all will be critical in bringing the pandemic to an end. And we thank host countries for including displaced people in their vaccination programs. Australia is playing its part by committing up to 60 million vaccine doses to our region by the end of 2022. We have

also supported other nations in health worker training, cold chain equipment, public information campaigns and technical advice to policymakers and regulators.

Australia also remains committed to a generous resettlement program. The current size of the Program, set at a ceiling of 13,750 places, reflects the Australian Government's ongoing commitment to ensuring the best possible settlement support for new and recent humanitarian entrants during the COVID-19 economic downturn. The Government wants all humanitarian entrants to have the best possible opportunities to succeed in Australia, including through finding a job, learning English and integrating into the community.

High Commissioner, the intersecting challenges facing displaced people in the context of COVID-19 and conflict are particularly and tragically evident in Afghanistan. Again, we commend UNHCR for staying and delivering. Australia holds grave concerns for the people of Afghanistan. Our humanitarian response must ensure that we pay particular attention to the most vulnerable, including displaced women and children.

On 13 September, our Foreign Minister announced that Australia will contribute AUD 100 million in humanitarian assistance to respond to the Afghanistan crisis from 2021 to 2024. This comprises around AUD 65 million in immediate lifesaving assistance and support to the neighbouring countries hosting Afghan refugees, and includes our existing \$5 million contribution to UNHCR's Afghanistan Situation Supplementary Appeal to support support displaced people in Afghanistan, as well as preparedness activities in the region. Around AUD 35 million will also be provided to address the protracted nature of the humanitarian crisis out to 2024. We will primarily work through UN partners, with a specific focus on supporting women and girls.

Australia is also working to ensure that visa options continue to be available to Afghan nationals through Australia's long-standing Humanitarian and Migration Programs. An initial 3,000 places have been allocated within Australia's humanitarian

program. Priority will be given to persecuted minorities, women and children and those with close links to Australia. We anticipate this initial allocation will increase further over the course of 2021–22.

In our immediate region, Australia continues to provide humanitarian assistance to crisis affected and displaced communities across Myanmar, and in Bangladesh. We are supporting COVID-19 preparedness and response activities, at the same time delivering life-saving assistance to the most vulnerable.

We have sustained humanitarian assistance to Myanmar, including to address the compounding challenges of the political crisis and the pandemic. In Cox’s Bazar, we have supported Rohingya refugees and host communities through expanding health facilities and field hospitals, improving water, sanitation and hygiene facilities, and providing protection services.

We thank UNHCR for its work on age, gender and diversity mainstreaming, and localisation and participation – these areas of effort continue to be high priorities for Australia. UNHCR has made notable gains in these areas and we encourage you to share lessons learnt across the UN system.

High Commissioner, we look forward to continuing our longstanding partnership with UNHCR and to advancing our shared priorities to support displaced people globally and in our region. Thank you.