

Austria

**UNHCR Executive Committee**

70<sup>th</sup> Session

High-Level Segment on Statelessness and General Debate

Statement by Ambassador Elisabeth Tichy-Fisslberger

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Austria aligns itself with the Statement on behalf of the EU and its Member States.

Mister Chair,

Let me first start by thanking UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed, OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities Lamberto Zannier, UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador Cate Blanchett and Ms. Maha Mamo for their very interesting and enlightening keynote addresses. I would also like to thank High Commissioner Filippo Grandi for his statement and his excellent work. We equally thank all UNHCR's staff for their relentless dedication and work in often difficult and dangerous operating environments.

With more than 70 million people having been forced from their homes as a result of persecution, conflict and violence, the situation of refugees and internally displaced persons has again reached a new level of unprecedented dimension. Protracted crisis situations in Syria, Iraq, Libya, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Ukraine and Venezuela continue to cause massive displacement and large-scale movements of refugees. Faced with a humanitarian challenge of this magnitude, the international community is more than ever dependent on the tireless efforts and indispensable work of UNHCR in order to protect and improve the lives of forcibly displaced people.

In this regard, we particularly appreciate that UNHCR has enhanced its capacities to more effectively respond to forced displacement emergencies. We value the Office's efforts in supporting access to quality education for refugee and host community children, such as in Ethiopia, Kenya, Yemen and by means of the "No Lost Generation" Initiative in Syria. We also welcome the creative solutions developed to address the protection problems faced by displaced youth, including sexual and gender-based violence, discrimination, obstacles to integration in host communities and the lack of education and livelihood opportunities.

The affirmation of the Global Compact on Refugees on 17 December 2018 was a milestone on the road towards a comprehensive and sustainable response to extensive movements of refugees. The first Global Refugee Forum, which will take place in Geneva this December, presents an important opportunity to bring together all rele-

vant stakeholders and partners, develop tangible improvements for refugees as well as for the refugee-hosting communities and give a say to refugees themselves.

Since 2015 Austria itself remains among the European States hosting one of the highest numbers per capita of recognised refugees. In addition to providing accommodation and what we call basic care for currently around 32,600 asylum seekers in need. In addition, my Government has continued to dedicate considerable expenses on integration measures. Since 2015, Austria has provided German language courses for more than 60,000 refugees and value and orientation in Austria for more than 100,000 refugees. These value and orientation courses focus on the fundamental values of living together in Austria, such as freedom of expression, gender equality and tolerance. We have also implemented procedures for refugees, who are not able to present documents from their countries of origin, to acknowledge completed education or trainings. These and several other measures are part of a 50 Points Action Plan, which has been designed as Austria's basic document for refugee integration. Furthermore, Austria has, in 2019, dedicated 500,000 euros to UNHCR in order to support the protection of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh.

We appreciate that UNHCR, as part of this session of the Executive Committee, has convened a High-Level Segment on Statelessness to mark the mid-point of the #IBELONG Campaign. We want to express our support for the campaign and attach great importance to all endeavours to end statelessness. Austria already in 1972 acceded to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness and in 2008 acceded to the 1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons. I wish to congratulate the 15 States who have become a party to one or both of the Conventions since the launch of the #IBELONG Campaign in 2014 and whose accession we have celebrated on Monday. In order to properly implement these Conventions, Austrian law possesses a variety of rules which aim at reducing statelessness or mitigating its adverse consequences in a world being built of States.

Finally, let me assure you, High Commissioner, that we have taken due note of the growing numbers of forcibly displaced persons as well as of the increasingly complex consequences arising from the current crisis situations, which you have presented to us today. We will diligently report them back to our capital for our new Government – which is expected to take office in a few weeks' time - to be considered as the basis for their decisions on how to sustainably respond to the present protection challenges. Austria will continue to be a strong partner of UNHCR and support your organisation in your precious work and your response to the demanding tasks we are facing today.

Thank you very much.