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GENEVA

UNHCR Executive Committee

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Agenda item 3: General Debate

Statement by Portugal

Thank you Chair

Portugal fully aligns with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

Let me start by sharing with you the story of Farid, who can teach us about resilience, hope, integration and the importance of international protection.

Farid is afghan, athlete, student, refugee and he knows how to fight: in life and in the boxing ring. He arrived in Portugal, in December 2012, at the age of 15, as a non-accompanied minor. He left his country when he was 7 and lost his family. For several years he travelled through Pakistan, Iran and Turkey, mostly by foot. When he was in a refugee camp in Greece, UNHCR gave him two options for resettlement. He decided for Portugal because he heard about Cristiano Ronaldo.

Sports, like drawing, is one of his motivations in life. Shortly after arriving in Portugal, he began boxing. One year later he won the National title in his category. He lives in Lisbon and has an arduous training schedule (he wants to be part of the refugee Olympic Team in 2023). He also studies architecture and now speaks fluent Portuguese. For his inspiring story, Farid was awarded the Human Rights Prize by the Portuguese Parliament and attended the Global Refugee Forum, two years ago.

I could also tell you about Dorian, from Congo, who participated in the Olympic Games in Tokyo this year, and many others, who make us proud. They are proof that if we build bridges and provide refugees with tools and opportunities in sports and education, they will become autonomous and able to accomplish their dreams.

144 non-accompanied minors - of our commitment to host 500 from the refugee camps in the Greek Islands - are already in Portugal We put in place a specific programme to ensure they can integrate in school and society.



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Among the almost 200 afghans recently arrived in Portugal, there is the national female football team and their families. Hopefully, these girls will be able to continue their path in sports, fully integrate in our country and contribute to the community.

Chair,

Portugal remains committed to the protection, assistance, reception and integration of refugees and migrants. The principles of responsibility and solidarity, the respect for the dignity of the human person, and combating trafficking of human beings and illegal immigration are at the core of our approach. Those are our guiding positions in the European Pact on Migration and Asylum. In solidarity, we will continue to take our share of responsibility in the relocation programmes and be part in the rescue operations in the Mediterranean.

Since 2015, Portugal has been taking part in resettlement programmes, working closely with UNHCR and contributing to the collective effort to create legal and complementary pathways for persons in need of international protection. Resettlement and integration have been conducted in partnership between central government, international organisations, local authorities, public and private entities and civil society.

The importance to safeguard the right to seek asylum and the principle of *non-refoulement*, as enshrined in the 1951 Refugee Convention is more relevant than ever, as is the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. We condemn any attempt to instrumentalize migrants and refugees.

Chair,

The dramatic increase of humanitarian crisis induced by conflicts, climate change and food insecurity, exacerbated by COVID-19, amplified the needs of vulnerable populations. We see historic numbers of refugees and forcibly displaced. Protection challenges are wider and more urgent. There is a need for global response based on international solidarity.

Portugal joined the international community's efforts to respond to calls for financial contributions. We commend countries hosting large refugee populations for their continued efforts and generosity.

The adoption of ExCom conclusions on international protection and durable solutions in the context of a public health emergency is timely and relevant.

We acknowledge the central role of the Global Compact on Refugees and continue working to fulfil the pledges presented at the Global Refugee



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Forum. We look forward to the High Level Officials Meeting, in December, as an opportunity to take stock of progress achieved, and to look at future priorities.

Conscious of growing difficult operational conditions and increased insecurity in humanitarian settings, we commend UNHCR and its staff for adapting to the circumstances and for their commitment to deliver assistance under very challenging circumstances.

Chair,

Portugal has a long tradition in promoting Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and pays particular attention to education in emergencies. The complexities of most conflicts, their increased duration and their profound, long-lasting effects, reaffirm the key role of education. Higher education in countries facing conflict is crucial for an early recovery and for long-lasting rebuilding.

Among the initiatives supported by the Portuguese Government, is the Global Platform for Higher Education in Emergencies and its Rapid Response Mechanism, which has offered emergency higher degree scholarships to young refugees and, more recently, to forcibly displaced students, allowing them to continue their studies. The Platform is developing an initiative for Afghan female students.

Chair,

In order to respond to the growing challenges and needs, we all have to be more efficient, resilient, committed and results oriented. Our actions need to be guided by humanitarian responsibility and solidarity, *leaving no one behind*. Portugal is firmly committed to that.

I Thank you