

Swiss Statement at HLOM – 14 December – Manuel Bessler

Mr High Commissioner Filippo Grandi
Co-Conveners,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I'm really honoured to represent Switzerland at the HLOM. Today, I will **report on the progress** we have made towards the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees and in particular to realize our GRF pledges. I will also speak about **challenges experienced** and **areas of further engagement**.

When I travel to the field, refugees tell me again and again that **education is a top priority**. In fact, as part of our delegation, Shadi Shhadeh, a Syrian refugee living in Switzerland, told us "*Refugees are people who for no fault of their own have lost good part of their past, good part of their present, hence they deserve, and it is our shared responsibility to, at least, offer an opportunity for a future, such opportunity comes mainly and above all through a proper, adapted and quality education for all.*" We share Shadi's view, we too see education as much more than going to school, it restores a sense of normalcy for displaced children, offers protection and tangible perspectives for the future.

Switzerland has made significant progress on the education front:

- We jointly launched in January 2021 the Geneva Global Hub for Education in Emergencies. It aims to trigger more political will, funding and operational commitment to the education of children affected by crisis and forced displacement. Today, the hub is vibrant with 31 members.
- We delivered on our commitment for increased funding for education of refugee children. As an example, Swiss funds are contributing to the building of a school and vocational programs in Pakistan for Afghan refugees.
- Here in Switzerland, we have progressed the inclusion of refugee children in public schools. Instead of children of newly-arrived asylum seekers being educated in reception centers, the city of Zürich is helping children to attend nearby public schools, so they regain a sense of normalcy and get to mingle with their peers.

If Swiss **cities** are at the forefront of **refugee inclusion here at home**, they are also increasingly involved in **international refugee policy**. Beyond their borders, they are supporting refugee-host cities around the world to deliver essential services and livelihood opportunities for newcomers and their hosts. The city of Zurich, which is a key member of our delegation at the HLOM, represents the voice of cities worldwide on behalf of the Mayors Migration Council and the Mayors Mechanism. I'm proud to report that the government is committed to a more systematic dialogue with Swiss cities, so we can deliver jointly on the GCR. Looking forward, we are working together with UNHCR to launch in 2022 the **Call to Local Action for Migrants and Refugees**, highlighting the efforts and challenges faced by cities in integrating refugees. This, I expect, will lead to improved coordination and new partnerships.

Reducing the negative impact of **climate change** and **greening humanitarian aid** is one of Switzerland's top priorities; it also contributes positively to the objectives of the GCR. To this end, Switzerland was the first donor to sign the *Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organizations*; we are delighted that UNHCR also signed it and invite others to do so. Switzerland is at the forefront of leveraging **technology and innovation** towards greener and cost-effective solutions for refugees. I am proud to announce, with UNHCR, the launch of the **Geneva**

Technical Hub. It provides cutting-edge Swiss expertise to scale up, among others, solutions in the areas of renewable and clean energy, and sustainable water supply and waste management. This hub will help advance UNHCR's new strategy on greening its operations, climate resilience and environmental sustainability.

Switzerland is a country of **resettlement**. Our new resettlement scheme for 2022-23 reflects an increase in admissions with 1,600 places. It will focus on the Middle East and areas along the central Mediterranean migration route. Given recent developments in Afghanistan, Afghan refugees from Turkey will be among those resettled. In addition, we continue to support UNHCR-resettlement activities, including through the secondment of experts, as well as states interested in setting up a national resettlement program. Missing migrants and refugees on the move are of great concern to us; with ICRC, we have redoubled efforts to improve transnational cooperation for search, identification and family interaction.

Our delegation today goes **beyond whole-of-government representation**; we are proud to count among us local authorities, civil society and a young refugee. We recognize the potential and leadership that young refugees bring and continue to strengthen their capacity to **take part and influence policy and advocacy processes**. On the NGO front, *AsyLex* provides complex, free legal advice to asylum seekers in Switzerland while *Helvetas* supports, among others, the resilience of Rohingya refugees and their hosts in Cox's Bazar.

We recognize the progress achieved since the affirmation of the Compact but also **acknowledge that more needs to be done**. We commit to playing our part and will step up our efforts in the lead up to the 2023 GRF.

In particular, as Co-Host to the HLOM, and based on our humanitarian tradition, we will continue to **leverage our political capital** to advance responsibility sharing and broaden the base of support. We recognize the **regional support platforms** as important mechanisms to increase the buy-in for burden sharing. Finally, we acknowledge that we can do more internally to deliver the **nexus approach**, by bringing together humanitarian, development and peacebuilding programming and financing. Global leadership starts at home.

To refugees, to UNHCR, to member states and all stakeholders present at the HLOM – know that we stand by you and with you.

Thank you.