

**Speaking Points – Council of Europe Special Representative of
the Secretary General on Migration and Refugees**

**73rd session of the Executive Committee of the High
Commissioner’s Programme**

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Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to congratulate you, High Commissioner for your re-election. Thank you also for the invitation to participate in this session and for your personal commitment in the excellent co-operation between our two Organisations.

- The unexpected and unprecedented events following the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine on 24 February marked us all: international organisations, member states, NGOs and individuals.
- In the Council of Europe (CoE), it had as a consequence the cessation of the membership of the Russian Federation following the decision of the Committee of Ministers on 16 March based on our Statute.
- In our member states, it resulted in the biggest influx of refugees we have witnessed since World War II.
- All CoE member states were affected and especially those neighbouring Ukraine. They all have shown remarkable support and solidarity with the people fleeing the country. Volunteers, civil society organisations and municipalities have played a crucial role in providing support to these people. Governments have encouraged such generosity.
- Like all partners, the CoE reacted swiftly to support its member states. GRETA, responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Council of Europe anti-trafficking Convention (Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings) issued a Guidance Note on addressing the risks of trafficking in human beings related to the war in Ukraine and the ensuing humanitarian crisis.
- The Lanzarote Committee, aiming at protecting children against sexual exploitation and abuse, issued a checklist to ensure the protection of children affected by the refugee crisis.
- Another checklist based on the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence aiming at protecting migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls was widely disseminated.

- Within the framework of the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees, measures were undertaken to help Ukrainian refugees find opportunities for further study and work. The passport, developed jointly with UNHCR, is a tool that facilitates the recognition of refugees' qualifications, even in the absence of documentation.
- We also put in place capacity building actions in areas ranging from psychological support to preventing trafficking or providing guidance on family-based care for unaccompanied and separated children.
- Last, but definitely not least, the Council of Europe Development Bank continues to provide significant support to countries facing a large influx of refugees.
- I conducted four fact-finding visits: to Slovakia, the Czech Republic, to Poland and to the Republic of Moldova. These visits were carried out notably with the aim of providing adequate assistance on the ground in line with the 5-year Action Plan on Protecting Vulnerable Persons in the Context of Migration and Asylum in Europe. The reports of these visits have been published.
- The Secretary General of the Council of Europe tasked me to coordinate the implementation of the Action Plan within the organisation, and also with international organisations, in order to determine how the CoE can best complement the ongoing efforts.
- With UNHCR, we are jointly organising follow up activities in the countries visited, aiming at protecting the human rights of the most vulnerable persons.
- Our co-operation also addresses the protection of human rights of all refugees, regardless of their country of origin. Our Action Plan allows for this approach and its implementation contributes to meeting the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees.
- Let me mention some relevant Recommendations of the Committee of Ministers adopted recently:

- on the protection of the rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls;
- on multilevel policies governance for intercultural integration;
- on combating trafficking in human beings for the purpose of labour exploitation

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The European Convention on Human Rights together with the Geneva Convention constitute the basis for our work.

The current refugee crisis has yet again shown us that together we are stronger and more effective.

Thank you for your attention!