

UNHCR Standing Committee – (13 October 2022)

Agenda item 4(a): Intervention on Protection

Australia thanks UNHCR for its update on international protection.

As the update has made clear, not only are we seeing conflict and violence displacing people at an alarming rate, but displacement is also occurring as a result of climate related disasters. Australia recognises the importance of the international community addressing and preventing the root causes of forced displacement, including conflict and the climate emergency. Creating conditions conducive to unlocking voluntary repatriation, and preventing displacement in the first place, are key to addressing the global crisis in international protection.

Until we get to that point, UNHCR will remain a critical part of the broader humanitarian system in delivering vital assistance in all circumstances, guided by the core principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence. Australia deeply appreciates UNHCR's vital work under challenging circumstances across the globe.

Australia also deeply appreciates all refugee-hosting countries for their support to displaced communities. The immense contribution made by refugee hosting countries to the cause of humanity is the bedrock of the Global Compact on Refugees.

We express our deep concern that over one-third of Ukraine's population has been displaced following Russia's unlawful invasion in February, with over 7.5 million people forced to flee Ukraine since February 2022. We commend the European response to this mass displacement in its region as one that embodies the principles of international cooperation and burden- and responsibility-sharing.

We commend UNHCR's efforts to find durable solutions for refugees. We emphasise the importance of voluntary, safe and dignified returns where conditions are conducive; and of States honouring

their obligation to receive their citizens who have been found not to be owed protection, as an integral component of a functioning global asylum system.

Since the end of World War II, Australia has successfully settled more than 930,000 refugees and others in humanitarian need, and we value the contribution that refugees have provided, and continue to provide, to Australian society, culture and prosperity.

The Australian Government is committed to sustaining generous and flexible humanitarian and settlement programs that meet Australia's international protection obligations and position Australia as a global leader in international resettlement efforts. The Australian Government also aspires to progressively increase Australia's humanitarian intake over coming years.

Our current annual program of 13,750 places will provide permanent resettlement to some of those refugees most in need and others requiring Australia's protection. Further, an additional 16,500 places for Afghan nationals will be delivered over the next four years over and above the annual Program intake. This includes 4,125 places this program year.

Australia's record on refugee resettlement and generous humanitarian assistance is representative of our longstanding contribution to burden sharing. We have been able to maintain this long resettlement tradition due to our strong border protection policies, consistent with our international obligations and our rights as a sovereign nation. The social licence for our humanitarian programme relies on public confidence in the government to control migration.

At a time of unprecedented global displacement, the Australian Government recognises that we need to look beyond traditional responses and provide additional pathways for more refugees and displaced people to safely move to third countries. To this end, we welcome the development of the new Third Country Solutions for Refugees: Roadmap 2030, as a key vehicle to expand third country solutions.

Consistent with the Roadmap, and in line with our commitment under the Global Compact on Refugees, Australia is piloting new approaches to complementary pathways for refugees and other displaced people, including through refugee labour mobility and community sponsorship pathways.

Australia is proud to be championing the expansion of refugee labour mobility pathways globally, as a founding member of the Global Task Force on Refugee Labour Mobility, drawing from our own Skilled Refugee Labour Agreement Pilot.

Australia is also proud to have recently welcomed the first refugee arrivals under our Community Refugee Integration and Settlement Pilot. This Pilot will allow more Australians to make a direct contribution to resettling refugees and helping them adapt to life in Australia.

As refugee situations around the world increase in scope, scale, and complexity, Australia remains committed to contributing to finding sustainable global solutions.