

**United States - UNHCR 73rd ExCom
Protection Statement
October 13, 2022**

The United States deeply appreciates the work UNHCR and its partners undertake to provide protection and assistance to an unprecedented 100 million persons who are forcibly displaced.

Access to asylum and the principle of non-refoulement remain the bedrock of the international refugee protection system. The United States is committed to improving its asylum system and continues to support other nations to expand access to asylum for populations of concern. This year, we assumed the chair of the MIRPS Support Platform, which coordinates funding and technical assistance for the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework to address forced displacement in Mexico and Central America. The United States also chairs the Group of Friends of UNHCR's #iBelong Campaign to End Statelessness. A commitment to protection is central to the Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection adopted at the Summit of the Americas in June. We applaud the progress of endorsing countries to implement this Declaration.

Among other situations, the United States is deeply alarmed by increasing trends in threats and reports of refoulement of Syrian refugees. We note UNHCR's declaration that Syria remains unsafe. We urge states to maintain protection and to cease any plans for large-scale returns to Syria at this time.

In Ukraine, we continue to work toward the protection of individuals who have been put in harm's way by Russia's full-scale invasion. The United States unequivocally rejects Russia's fraudulent attempt to change Ukraine's internationally recognized borders.

Furthermore, the United States is deeply concerned by reports of Russian authorities and proxies detaining, interrogating, and abusing hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian citizens. We condemn the alleged forced relocation of Ukrainians into so-called "filtration" facilities in Russian-controlled areas of Ukraine and within Russia itself. The United States underscores that the unlawful transfer or deportation of protected persons during armed conflict is a grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention on the protection of civilians and a war crime.

In April 2022, the United States launched *Uniting for Ukraine* – a new pathway for Ukrainian citizens forced to flee their homes as a result of Russia's ongoing invasion of Ukraine – managed by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Ukrainian citizens approved via this process are authorized to travel to the United States and be considered for parole for a period of up to two years. Once paroled, Ukrainian citizens are eligible to apply for a work authorization. To date, more than 62,000 Ukrainian citizens have been paroled into the United States under this program. The United States also welcomes other efforts underway to

expand temporary forms of protection and commends efforts by the EU, Colombia, and Ecuador in this regard.

We underscore the importance of protection for persons with disabilities, among others, who are often overlooked among populations of concern and encourage UNHCR to strengthen its inclusive approach to programming and protection for persons living with disabilities.

The United States also remains steadfast in its commitment to combatting gender-based violence (GBV) in humanitarian action. We have renewed our “*Safe from the Start*” partnership with UNHCR, with new objectives to bring effective GBV interventions to scale and drive increased representation of and leadership by women and girls. As over half of those forcibly displaced are children, it is paramount to prioritize protection services and access to education – boys and girls alike. The United States welcomes efforts to empower and build children’s resiliency through the creation of safe and protective environments and increasing children’s participation in issues affecting their lives.

Racial, ethnic, religious, and gender discrimination remain major causes of statelessness, and the United States urges UNHCR to allocate greater core resources to address this insidious form of marginalization and exclusion. We encourage strategic efforts to accelerate progress toward the #iBelong Campaign’s

vision of ending statelessness. We stress the need for UNHCR to remain equally committed to the three prongs of its statelessness mandate: prevention, solutions, and protection.

The United States welcomes UNHCR's report on Engagement in Internal Displacement Settings. We urge Member States and UNHCR to fund this work, and we call upon relevant States to leverage UNHCR's expertise to support them in developing and implementing national laws and policies on internal displacement. In conclusion, Member States and UNHCR face enormous protection challenges that demand our leadership, our humanity, our whole-of-society approaches, and our accountability.

Thank you.