

UNHCR Executive Committee session

Statement by Permanent Representative of the Republic of Lithuania,

Ambassador Andrius Krivas

4 October 2017

Distinguished High Commissioner, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my honour to address you for the first time on behalf of Lithuania as a new member of the Executive Committee as of this year. I would also like to congratulate Fiji and Paraguay on becoming members of the Executive Committee.

Lithuania fully aligns itself with the statement by the European Union and would like to add a few remarks in our national capacity.

As we witness new and continued conflicts, and ever-more disturbing forms of violence and persecution, we share the concern of the High Commissioner regarding the increasing humanitarian needs and forced displacement. We praise the High Commissioner's work dedicated to solving the problems of refugees from Syria, Iraq, Myanmar and other places of conflicts or disasters. Lithuania contributes every year to the alleviation of these humanitarian crises by through the UNHCR.

We highly value the activities of the UNHCR in offering international protection and safeguarding the rights and well-being of refugees. The lives of millions of people are at risk today on perilous routes while fleeing war, violence and human rights violations, including sexual and gender-based violence, seeking safety and protection. Regardless of their status, countries must ensure effective protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while implementing policies that address the movement of refugees.

As we continue to face large-scale influxes and mixed movement of people in many regions of the world, Lithuania firmly believes that the refugee response should be guided by the principles of, and respect for, fundamental rights as enshrined in the

United Nations Charter and the Geneva Convention on Refugees. The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants reaffirms that international cooperation is an essential element to the refugee protection, and it also underlines the leadership of UNHCR in tackling this pressing phenomenon. We support the UNHCR-led process of drafting a Global Compact on Refugees that will set forth concrete application of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF). The CRRF offers a chance to strengthen protection and deliver more sustainable solutions for refugees and host communities with the aim to improve access to services, create employment opportunities and improve protection for both the displaced and their hosts, while targeting, protecting and supporting the most vulnerable. We thank the UNHCR for its leadership in rolling out the CRRF and call on all Participating States to fully use its potential.

Compared to the beginning of the recent migration crisis, the refugee flow to Europe is now better controlled and more manageable, thanks to resolute common efforts of EU Member States and international community. However, due to the ongoing armed conflicts in Syria, Iraq and elsewhere, the situation remains fragile. We must be vigilant and act without delay in order to save lives and ensure the protection of refugees.

Lithuania believes that alongside assistance to refugees and protection of their rights, special attention must also be given to safe, voluntary and dignified return and to the promotion of legal pathways for those in need of protection.

Lithuania reiterates its commitment to share the burden with those EU Member States that have been strongly affected by the refugee crisis. Lithuania has been actively carrying out relocation and resettlement programmes. To date, we have implemented one third of our voluntarily-accepted quota. Lithuanian border guards are actively engaged in the EU FRONTEX joint operations as well as in the Rapid Intervention Team deployed on the Greek islands. Lithuanian officers have assisted Bulgarian, Greek, Italian, Hungarian, Slovenian, Spanish and other colleagues in managing refugee and migration flows in the Mediterranean.

We should also focus more on the support for internally displaced persons (IDPs) who are at risk of becoming refugees if their displacement persists. As an example, we note,

in particular, the current situation in Ukraine with regard to IDPs fleeing the zone of conflict with Russia. The number and structure of displaced population there (mostly elderly and children, i.e. people in vulnerable situations) as well as their suffering continue to be a cause of great concern. We thank the UNHCR for the support it has provided to IDPs through protection and legal assistance, policy development and capacity building, and through distribution of emergency shelter materials and non-food items.

Mr. High Commissioner,

Lithuania is committed and ready to follow your leadership in finding solutions for global refugee-related challenges we all face today.

Thank you.