

**69th Session of the UNHCR Executive Committee**

**Geneva, 1-5 October 2018**

**Statement of Belgium**

**- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY -**

Madame/ Mister Chair,

Belgium aligns itself with the statement made by the EU on behalf of the EU and its Member States.

It will not be a surprise that I commence my statement this year with the Global Compact on Refugees. Belgium actively supported the process that culminated in a landmark consensus-text after a comprehensive, inclusive and delicately-led consultation process.

It is therefore more than appropriate to already direct a special word of thanks and congratulations for the constructive efforts, skill and endurance that UNHCR, UN Member States and other relevant stakeholders have shown. I hereby appeal to continue along this path of constructive cooperation by formally endorsing the GCR.

After the adoption of the GCR in New York, the focus will then shift to global implementation and follow-up.

Regular, systematic and detailed updates from the field about the effective operationalization of the CRRF/GCR will be essential for a hands-on approach and to distill lessons-learned.

Inter-agency cooperation, including with IOM, will be crucial, to strengthen the humanitarian-development nexus and to mobilize additional resources. For the latter, we also support the engagement of the private sector.

Belgium is in favor of UNHCR's cooperation with the World Bank, as we are convinced of the added value of the WB's financial instruments such as grants, loans but also risk insurances, and we welcome the refugees' sub-window in IDA 2018. Of course, the humanitarian character of refugee related interventions has to be safeguarded, in particular the respect for the humanitarian principles.

We welcome the commitment of UNHCR to adapt to new dynamics and opportunities, including flexibility and agility in the field, while giving due attention to the UNDS-reform. My country stands ready to accompany the organization in its transformation process.

Belgium wishes to congratulate UNHCR with its unqualified audit opinion and also thanks UNHCR for its transparent reporting regarding the follow-up of the recommendations of the different control bodies. It continues to encourage UNHCR to implement these recommendations in a timely manner and to further explore areas to work more cost-effectively.

We would also like to take the opportunity to commend UNHCR on the considerable progress it is making as a value-based agency in meeting the objective of gender parity by 2023, well before the SG's 2026 deadline, and for its zero tolerance stance on sexual exploitation and abuse, and sexual harassment.

With respect to Belgium's contributions to UNHCR, I would like to mention that in 2018 Belgium increased its un-earmarked contributions to UNHCR to 8 million EUR per year for the next three years. Our policy and Grand Bargain commitments regarding flexible multi-year financing are thereby confirmed.

Belgium also funds UNHCR interventions in Tanzania and Rwanda for refugees from DRC, interventions in Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq for refugees from Syria and interventions in Chad for Sudanese refugees.

Because humanitarian innovation is high on our agenda, we are also supporting UNHCR's Innovation Fund, which specifically focuses on field innovation.

Additional earmarked resources have recently been allocated for UNHCR interventions in Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Nigeria and Yemen. This will bring the total Belgian contribution to UNHCR in 2018 to well over 20 million EURO. This amount does not take into account the funding UNHCR additionally receives from Belgium's contribution to the Country-based Pooled Funds and the CERF.

Finally, for many years, Belgium is supporting refugee resettlement programmes and continues to do so. This year already 714 refugees, mainly Syrian refugees, were resettled in Belgium.

Thank you, Madame/ Mister Chair