

**UNHCR - Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's
Programme (EXCOM)**

69th session

**Delivered by Ambassador Aviva Raz Shechter,
Permanent Representative of Israel to the UN in Geneva**

Madam Chairperson,
High Commissioner Grandi,

At the outset, I would like to convey our condolences to the people of Indonesia.

I have the honor to address the 69th session of the Executive Committee of UNHCR at this crucial moment in the history of the long struggle to address the global refugee challenge. Each meeting of the Executive Committee provides us with an opportunity to improve dialogue and to consider solutions for the millions of people who are currently on the move, whether forcibly displaced or fleeing dangers.

I would like to commend the excellent work performed by UNHCR in leading the global response to the refugee crisis today. This includes paying tribute to the many dedicated women and men who are committed to helping refugees wherever they may be, often putting their own lives at risk.

I would also like to thank High Commissioner Grandi for his opening remarks, marking challenges, but also opportunities, for States as well as all other stakeholders. We especially take note of the key idea of reinforcing the support to states to address protection challenges, and the due emphasis put on innovation as a guiding principle in the implementation of UNHCR's "strategic directions".

Let me reiterate a point we have raised before on several occasions, namely that it is crucial to identify the way different countries can become involved in the global effort to respond to humanitarian crisis, ensuring a proper use of both resources and expertise. A smart harnessing of different sets of capabilities will allow us not only to improve the refugee response itself, but also help the global community free up financial resources, which can then be used to cover other needs.

In this vein, Israel, a longstanding supporter of UNHCR and one of the fifteen original members of the ExCom, stands ready to play a role in the global response to the mounting needs.

For example, Israel is a worldwide recognized leader on securing water resources through the implementation of practical, simple, yet scientifically-supported solutions, and has for decades shared this knowledge. Israel is ready to use this expertise to aid refugee communities fulfill their basic needs, and assist in capacity-building in their countries of origin.

Madam Chairperson,

This year marks a milestone in the efforts taken, for the last two years, by the International Community in Geneva that has been actively engaged in the negotiation of the Global Compact on Refugees. The product of this arduous effort will be included in the next report by the High Commissioner to the General Assembly. We expect to end this year with the text adopted, and ready to move towards a next crucial phase: implementation. The negotiations were sometimes hard, but always worthwhile. Under the leadership of UNHCR, we have a text we can all be proud of. This non-binding text is the product of a professional, transparent and open process.

The implementation of the Global Compact will no doubt bring with it many challenges, as the convening of new mechanisms and a responsibility to improve collaboration and dialogue, share the responsibility, exchange good-practices and provide solutions to this current situation that affects many people around the globe.

We encourage UNHCR, when implementing the CRRF and its Plan of Action, to keep in mind the key role that innovation can play in providing creative solutions for important problems. We are pleased to note that the Programme of Action pays due attention to the essential role of developing innovative technology, which can help to meet basic humanitarian needs, and making them available to refugees. This has relevance both as an emergency measure, and as a longer-term development objective, for creating jobs, ensuring livelihoods and accommodation, and enabling efficient resource management. In particular, we believe that technical cooperation has a key role in crucial areas such as water and sanitation, harnessing the unique technological added value of relevant states.

Furthermore, we call upon UNHCR, States and partners to include from the outset women and people with disabilities when developing policies, planning actions, engaging with the private sector, and in particular, in any data collection activity. In an already complex context, the needs of those who are exposed to bigger risks and with limited options, should be a priority to all of us.

Additionally, we would appreciate receiving more information regarding the plans to further develop the actions already ongoing by UNHCR in the context of the CRRF, and how the new mechanisms established by the GCR will be developed, as well as the budgetary implications they may have.

During the consultations, Assistant High Commissioner Türk was right on the mark when he affirmed that the Global Compact is not the end, but rather the beginning of a continued dialogue on the important issue of refugee response. We agree that the Global Compact brings with it a new opportunity to build bridges between humanitarian and development actors, helping us to realize that this is the only way to achieve lasting solutions.

Madam Chairperson,

Let me conclude by saying that Israel's 70-year-long history has taught us that coping with large numbers of refugees may be extremely hard and complex, but not impossible. In its early years, our country successfully absorbed a large number of Holocaust survivors, as well as hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees from Arab and Muslim countries. These people were fully integrated into the society and economy of a nascent state, which in those days was still struggling with development as well as security challenges. Not only did they not hold Israel back, but they, just like subsequent incoming flows of people, have in fact been the driving force behind Israel's progress.

I thank you, Madam Chairperson