

**United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
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**General Debate
STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF IRELAND**

***H.E. Mr Michael Gaffey
Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations, Geneva***

Madam Chair,

Ireland aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union.

We thank the High Commissioner for his strong and comprehensive opening statement. In the context of global uncertainty and unprecedented humanitarian need, our challenge is to ensure that the adequacy of our response to the crisis of refugee flows and forced displacement does not become a defining issue of our time. As an international community, we have developed the framework, and we can generate the resources, to address the causes of the crisis, and its impact. It is critical that we maintain the political will to do so. Adopting the 2030 Agenda, world leaders agreed a new, indivisible and comprehensive framework for sustainable development and the future of the planet. We have pledged to leave no one behind, and to focus on the most vulnerable – and who today is more vulnerable than a child refugee forced from their home, education, community and future?

Over 65.6 million people are now forcibly displaced from their homes. Each one of them was on a life path which could contribute to their society and to global development. We have a moral and legal responsibility to them. And a clear interest, as an international community, in addressing effectively the conflicts and crises which have made them refugees and IDPs.

Last year, with Jordan, Ireland led the negotiations at the UN which delivered the New York Declaration, and we are committed to ensuring a more humane, dignified and compassionate response to the plight of refugees and migrants. The outcome documents from that Summit sent a strong message of political support, and of shared responsibility for actions aimed at saving lives. We need to ensure that our diplomatic, political, development and humanitarian efforts are more coherently deployed, more integrated, and more focused on the needs of refugees – in terms of the root causes of conflicts and the response to their views and their daily needs. These immediate needs range from shelter, food and protection, to education and medical care, and today many younger refugees also plead for the connectedness which now drives the world and our interdependence.

Madam Chair,

The High Commissioner has reminded us that, despite the pressures in Europe and elsewhere in the developed world, the impact of the refugee crisis is being borne disproportionately by the developing world and host communities in low and middle income countries. We recognise in particular the extraordinary humanity of countries in Africa, focused on development and ending poverty among their own people, which have opened their borders to vast numbers of refugees from conflicts in neighbouring states. Their actions and the needs of the refugees they are hosting underline the importance of agreement in 2018 on a strong global compact for refugees which provides for a more equitable sharing of burdens and responsibilities.

We welcome the multi-stakeholder approach of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework, and the progress it points to in ensuring that humanitarian and development interventions are not seen as separate stages in a process but are

effectively linked as early as possible. The Framework will only be effective if it is sufficiently resourced, and this is now our shared responsibility.

Madam Chair,

Ireland strongly supports and pays tribute to the work of the UNHCR and the commitment of its staff in difficult and dangerous circumstances. We commend their success in adapting under pressure in the face of increasingly protracted and complex crises. We are reminded of these challenges daily, whether in responding to the rapidly unfolding crisis of Rohingya refugees or in the work of the UNHCR to urgently improve conditions of places of detention, for example in Libya.

We recognise that sexual and gender based violence remains an appalling feature of virtually every conflict and refugee situation. It is the harsh, cruel reality of women and girls forcibly displaced from their homes. We recognise the work of UNHCR in addressing its immediate consequences, but also its crippling long term impact for society as a whole. Ireland also warmly welcomes the comprehensive training programme developed by UNHCR and IOM to respond to the protection needs of LGBTI persons facing persecution, harassment and sexual and gender-based violence.

In highlighting the challenges, it is important to recognise the progress by the UNHCR on its Grand Bargain commitments, and the High Commissioner's promotion of greater coherence, efficiency, transparency and accountability. We urge the Office to continue implementation across all work streams. We also appreciate the efforts to ensure complementarity between the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact for Migration. We underline the enduring relevance of the 1951 Convention on Refugees and its protocol, which lay down basic minimum standards for the treatment of refugees, recalling that refugees are a matter of international concern,

requiring cooperation and solidarity. We are hopeful that we can strengthen this solidarity in the face of unprecedented challenge in the year ahead.

Thank you Madam Chair.