

**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA TO THE
UN OFFICE AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN
GENEVA**

Check against delivery

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Statement

by

Svetlana Geleva

Deputy Director for Multilateral Affairs

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the

Republic of Macedonia

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Madam Chair,

Mr. High Commissioner,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The delegation of the Republic of Macedonia has aligned with the Statement made by the European Union, but I wish to make a few remarks in my national capacity.

Let me begin by thanking the High Commissioner for his comprehensive and inspiring introductory statement on the current state of affairs, the challenges caused by forced displacement and by a large number of overlapping, protracted and emerging humanitarian crisis and in that context on the UNHCR response plan. We highly appreciate the efforts and dedication of the UNHCR staff working in extreme, often life threatening conditions, to alleviate the plight of persons in need of international protection all around the globe.

We particularly value the UNHCR Strategic Directions, setting out clear orientations for its work by 2021. The same applies to the development and financial assistance dimensions of the new model. We believe they are crucial for sustainability of our efforts, both in regard to safe and sustained returns and the benefit to the host communities.

With more than 65 million people forcefully displaced, solidarity, partnership and burden-sharing must remain at the forefront of the global response. The NY Declaration adopted in September last year constitutes a powerful platform to this end. It has opened up a new era in which political and legal commitments must be translated into concrete action.

One of the important results was Annex 1 - Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework whose practical implementation was discussed at the special segment of this session. The special segment was a timely opportunity to acquire an insight into diversity of views and solutions in the context of the discussions on the refugee compact to be adopted next year.

The Republic of Macedonia expect the compact to be solution-based and in line with the existing international humanitarian and human rights standards. We also expect the work on the two compacts – on refugees and on migrants to be closely coordinated by various stakeholders as to avoid overlapping on common elements of these two closely linked processes. The Republic of Macedonia is ready to contribute to the intergovernmental consultations and negotiations by sharing its own experiences.

Madam Chair,

In 2015 and 2016 over 800.000 refugees transited the Republic of Macedonia, as one of the countries along the so-called Balkan route. Following the 7 March 2016 EU–Turkey Summit the route was closed, but since then there has been an increase of varying intensity in attempts of illegal crossing of the Greek – Macedonian border.

For illustration, between 1 January – 31 August 2017 a total number of 2216 migrants attempted to illegally enter Macedonia.

Between 1 January – 31 August 2017 the Macedonian police documented 8 cases related to smuggling of migrants, involving more than 90 migrants.

The border management cooperation with partner countries and organizations continues. Currently there are 149 guest police officers from partner countries in the Republic of Macedonia.

As of yesterday, the total of 54 migrants/asylum seekers have been staying in Macedonia. The center for asylum-seekers Vizbegovo accommodates 16 persons, two transit centers 29, while 5 persons are accommodated in the Safe House.

In 2017, a total of 91 persons applied for asylum in Macedonia, while 4 gained international protection status.

The Republic of Macedonia still hosts 404 persons from the Kosovo conflict, with the subsidiary protection status. All persons have regular access to social protection rights, health insurance, accommodation, and educational and employment assistance for those registered to participate in local integration process. The Center for Integration of Refugees and Foreigners established in 2009, continues to provide direct assistance to refugees and implement measures defined at the individual or family integration plans.

In 2017, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy prepared the first draft of the new Strategy for Integration of Refugees and Foreigners 2017-2027. The consultation process with various national stakeholders, including civil society, and with the UN agencies is ongoing. The draft is expected to be finalized by the end of 2017.

The reform package of the new Government, the so-called 3/6/9 plan, foresees the adoption of amendments to the Law on Asylum based on the EU expertise.

As regards the Reduction of Statelessness Convention of 1961, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will continue working with other national stakeholders to ensure its ratification.

The UNHCR Office in the Republic of Macedonia has continued to be very instrumental to all the national efforts regarding refugees and asylum seekers. A few days ago, the Ministry of Interior and the UNHCR Office signed a Memorandum of understanding the aim of which is to assist the national authorities enhance protection of asylum seekers and persons under international protection in line with the law, customary international law on refugees and European law on asylum.

Let me conclude by underlining the importance of states working together to on prevention and protection, maximizing available resources, addressing the root causes and drivers of displacement and securing long-term and sustainable solutions to alleviate the suffering of tens of millions of people around the globe. States must pay special attention to the humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable among the people on the move – woman and minors, victims of human trafficking and gender-based violence and must ensure their safety and dignity as well as protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Thank you for the attention.