

72nd Session of the UNHCR Executive Committee (2021)

Government of Canada:

General Statement

Chair, High Commissioner Grandi, distinguished delegates; it is a great honour to address you today.

On behalf of Canada's delegation, I wish to thank the High Commissioner for his opening remarks and for his strong and effective leadership. We commend the Agency, its staff, and its partners for their dedication and sustained commitment throughout these challenging and unpredictable times.

At this critical juncture, we must not lose our sense of urgency in addressing the unprecedented levels of forced displacement around the world, compounded by the impact of COVID-19 on crisis-affected populations.

Canada echoes the calls to bring international attention to the many Afghans in need of protection, both within and outside the country, and we support the call to Member states to further increase support and engagement with Afghanistan's neighbours, who have generously hosted millions of Afghans for decades, to assist them in their efforts to respond to current and future needs. Canada for its part has committed to also doing its share and resettling Afghan refugees over the next several years.

While the international community mobilizes in response to Afghanistan, we cannot forget the dozens of other situations around the world where refugees continue to wait for both humanitarian and political solutions.

What is urgently needed is more sustained political leadership and dialogue that works to address the underlying root causes of humanitarian crises, while working to find lasting and rights-based solutions. To this end, Canada encourages Member states to redouble efforts to leverage the potential of the triple nexus of humanitarian-development-peacebuilding responses.

Mr. Chair, Canada recognises the many negative health, social and economic consequences of the global pandemic on communities across the world. This continues to have a disproportionate impact on refugees and a significant impact on the work of UNHCR and other humanitarian partners. In our continued efforts to battle the effects of Covid-19 across the globe, we call on all Member States to ensure that all persons of concern have equal access to vaccines and be included in national vaccination campaigns of host countries.

As the pandemic has underscored, global crises require global solutions, and we recognize now, more than ever, the need to redouble our efforts towards increased

responsibility sharing. Canada would like to call on the international community to remain committed to the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees.

We are proud of our ongoing and future planned efforts to assist UNHCR in preserving and advancing progress in the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees, including through humanitarian funding and continuing to promote expanded refugee access to third-country solutions in line with the *Three-Year Strategy on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways*.

In the Americas, Canada applauds Columbia for granting ten-year temporary protection status to Venezuelans and we are proud to support the regional application of the Global Compact on Refugees in Central America, through our role as Chair of the Support Platform to the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework, also known by the Spanish acronym, MIRPS. We look forward to working with Guatemala, as pro tempore President, and the countries of the MIRPS to support their efforts to bring comprehensive solutions to refugee crises.

Mr. Chair, Canada continues to promote durable solutions for refugees, especially women and girls and those who face discrimination based on their sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics.

In particular, we are concerned that the world's most vulnerable and marginalized children and youth, including refugee girls and adolescent girls in all their diversity, will require additional support so that the devastating effects of the pandemic do not leave them further behind in accessing quality education.

To this end Canada is promoting education for refugee and internally displaced children and we continue to advocate for gender responsive solutions and coordination between UNHCR, local governments and other education actors to find sustainable, equitable solutions for school-aged refugee girls and boys in a global context where resources are limited.

Canada, believes that meaningful refugee participation in the work of the international refugee system remains a priority. We continue to engage with refugee-led organisations in a number of key initiatives, including by providing funding to refugee-led organizations as part of our "Together for Learning" refugee education initiative and by including refugee voices at the Venezuela donor's conference in June 2021. Canada's International Development Research Centre is also funding eight research chairs on forced displacement in four regions of the global South to further amplify refugee voices and contribute a localized knowledge base to localized responses.

Canada has been proud to include a refugee advisor as a member of our delegations to international conferences and meetings on refugees. Alongside our longstanding civil society colleagues, we are fortunate to benefit from the contributions of Maysoun Darweesh, the Refugee Advisor to our Canadian delegation this year.

In closing, as we stand in solidarity with refugees and the communities who generously host them, we call on ExCom member states to continue their strong support for UNHCR and for comprehensive refugee responses. The pandemic has demonstrated how we are all connected. Let's continue to learn from this experience and stand together to build a more just and equitable future with dignity and compassion for all.

Thank you.