



68th Session of the Executive Committee of the United Nations High
Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Programme

Statement by Sri Lanka

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**The Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka to the United Nations and other
International Organizations in Geneva**

Madam Chairperson,
High Commissioner Mr. Filippo Grandi,
Excellencies and Distinguish Delegates,

Sri Lanka is pleased to extend felicitations to you Madam Chairperson and your Bureau on election to this post and looks forward to your leadership in guiding the work of this forum. We appreciate the thoughtful presentation by High Commissioner Grandi that reflects upon global developments in relation to forced displacements and migration and provides us with an overview of the work being carried out by UNHCR and its dedicated staff across the world. Sri Lanka appreciates and applauds UNHCR for the invaluable role it carries out in providing protection, assistance and durable solutions to vulnerable populations across the world.

Given the increasing trend in forced displacements from protracted conflicts and disputes around the world, as well as displacements due to climate change and natural disasters, the future responsibilities of the UNHCR as well as countries, in dealing with this delicate subject will no doubt face intricate challenges. Continuous support and collaboration among the international community would be imperative to face such challenges; as no country on its own will be in a position to overcome such a crisis successfully without the assistance and cooperation of others.

Madam Chairperson,

Sri Lanka remains committed to work in coordination and in cooperation with the UNHCR at all times to address issues pertaining to asylum seekers and refugees in accordance with international norms and principles. Sri Lanka is a country of destination for people who have been displaced in neighbouring countries and works in cooperation with UNHCR to address issues of concerns at all times. A recent, unforeseen unfortunate incident of a group of miscreants attempting to attack 30 Rohingya refugees, rescued at sea by the

Sri Lanka Navy, who were under the care of the UNHCR in Sri Lanka caught the attention of many. The Government of Sri Lanka strongly condemned these acts and while prompt action was taken to ensure the safety and security of the refugees, action was also taken to initiate investigations into the incident with several arrests having been made as well.

Madam Chairperson,

While immediate attention is paid to the dire humanitarian requirements of displaced populations, it is also equally important to address the drivers of such irregular and mixed migration flows to contain any future crises of mass scale movements of people. Further, while it is noted that countries have a sovereign right to control their borders, extreme actions to close borders during humanitarian crises could lead to the opening up of avenues that escalate crimes such as smuggling and human trafficking, particularly given the character of mixed migration flows. We call for the strengthening of international partnerships to combat these heinous crimes including through capacity building in the countries of origin. Sri Lanka fully endorses the need to enhance support for developing countries that host millions of forcibly displaced populations compared to the size of the country's population or the size of their economy. In particular, to prevent fluid domestic situations and resource constraints, they need predictable cooperation and the widest possible support from the international community.

Madam Chairperson,

While much attention is being given to migration across national borders, it is also significant that the numbers getting displaced within their own countries or the internally displaced persons (IDPs) are also on the rise. Sri Lanka is grateful for the assistance provided over the years, by the UN and the UNHCR, towards addressing issues related to displacement.

I thank you.