
**United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
72nd Session Executive Committee**

Item 3- General Debate

Delivered by Amb. Meirav Eilon Shahar
Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations in Geneva

Mr. Vice Chairperson,

At the outset, I would like to wish a speedy recovery to our Chairperson, Amb. Farani Azevêdo.

I would like to extend our gratitude to the High Commissioner, the Deputy High Commissioner, and all UNHCR's staff for their strong commitment to protecting refugees and persons of concern and all their hard work during this challenging year.

Mr. Vice Chairperson,

As every year, the meeting of the Executive Committee provides us with an opportunity to improve dialogue and consider solutions for the millions of people who are currently on the move.

In this regard, I would like to thank High Commissioner Grandi for his opening remarks. We welcome the search for creative solutions to the challenges we face, embracing the important role that new technologies and innovation can play.

We also welcome the renewal of UNHCR's five Strategic Directions for another five years. Israel, one of the fifteen original members of the ExCom, stands ready to support UNHCR's work.

Mr. Vice Chairperson,

The challenges that displaced populations typically suffer have deepened in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. This population will often not seek medical care, due to fear of the authorities, unfamiliarity with the rules and lack of money or health insurance.

Therefore, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Israel took several measures, similar to many states around the world, to mitigate some of these challenges.

For example, authorities in Israel instructed hospitals and other medical facilities in the country to allow testing and treatment of persons staying in Israel regardless of their migratory or similar status, without payment and without any risk of detention.

Mr. Vice Chairperson,

Israel welcomes the adoption of a five-year "Action plan on disability inclusion" to advance the rights of persons with disabilities, which was launched across UNHCR's workforce and operations in 2020. We would, however, like to receive additional information regarding the implementation of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy, and encourage UNHCR to keep Member States updated, including by

sharing the reports submitted to the UN Secretary-General, and referring not only relating to programs in the field but on the design of programs and the measures taken within the organization. Furthermore, we would like to know more about consultations with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in their design and implementation.

We would also like to highlight the importance of developing specific tools to combat sexual and gender-based violence to ensure a zero tolerance policy for sexual harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse.

In this regard, we align ourselves with the Joint Statement delivered by Greece on behalf of the Geneva Group of Friends to Eliminate Sexual Harassment (GoFESH).

We welcome the work of the office of the Senior Coordinator on prevention and response to sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment and thank both the High Commissioner and the Deputy High Commissioner for their strong commitment on matters related to sexual misconduct. We also would like to take the opportunity to commend Ms. Clements for her work as Chair of the CEB's Task Force on Addressing Sexual Harassment within the Organizations of the UN System. In addition to this, we welcome the adoption of a "Policy on a Victim-Centred Approach", and invite UNHCR to share this policy with other UN agencies.

Mr. Vice Chairperson,

Regarding the Note on International Protection, we would first like to welcome the reference to the challenges that LGBTIQ+ persons face. We commend UNHCR for organizing a roundtable with the United Nations Independent Expert on Protection Against Violence and Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity and working with their representative organizations to address this situation.

Secondly, we thank UNHCR for acknowledging the mental health and psychosocial support needed by displaced persons, and we welcome the recognition of the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic in this regard.

Thirdly, we thank UNHCR for updating its guidance on working with older persons in displacement settings. In this regard, we would appreciate receiving additional information on the implementation of this guidance and its results.

Mr. Vice Chairperson,

To conclude, we would like to reiterate our gratitude to UNHCR for its work, and therefore, we would like to call other Member States to avoid politicization concerning it. We have recently faced political discussions regarding the guidance that UNHCR has asked Member States with respect to promoting international protection. As UN

Member States, our task should be to guide and support UNHCR's work, not to put obstacles to it by inserting political agendas within its mandate.

I thank you, Mr. Vice Chairperson.