



## UNHCR Executive Committee 72nd Session 4–8 October 2021

### Statement by Slovenia

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to begin by thanking the High Commissioner for his opening remarks, and for providing us with an overview of the current challenges and the operating environment of the UNHCR.

In addition to the EU statement, would like to use this opportunity to briefly highlight some national endeavours in this regard.

As a responsible member of the international community, Slovenia places the protection of vulnerable groups, especially refugees, in the centre of its humanitarian action. Over the past few years, Slovenia has provided humanitarian assistance for refugees through various international organisations, including the UNHCR.

We are very concerned about the devastating humanitarian situation, affecting over 18 million people in Afghanistan and neighbouring countries. The humanitarian needs are growing rapidly and the dire situation of the most vulnerable people is of our utmost concern. In these grave circumstances, it is imperative to strive for a principled and effective humanitarian action.

Recently, at the high-level meeting for Afghanistan, we pledged a contribution for Afghan people, through the UNCHR as well.

This year, Slovenian contributions focused on displaced persons from Syria, Yemen, and Palestine and on Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Brazil.

Additionally, Slovenia is currently implementing two humanitarian projects in Lebanon, providing comprehensive assistance for Syrian refugees, victims of gender-based violence, both implemented by NGOs.

Special attention is devoted to the integration of refugee children into the Slovenian school system. They have the right to enrol in schools under the same conditions as Slovenian citizens.

Mr Chair,

During the Slovenian EU Council Presidency, we are also focusing our attention on the humanitarian needs of vulnerable groups, including forcibly displaced persons. We frequently highlight this issue in discussions of the COHAFA Working Party and lead dialogue with member states and relevant international organisations.

We consider that access to water, one of our Presidency's priorities, is one of the key elements of social and economic resilience. In this light, we would like to underline the importance of the UNHCR WASH activities, including the Guidelines and Manual.

Let me add that the instrumentalisation of migrants and refugees by States is unacceptable. We condemn any attempts to instrumentalise migrants and refugees by orchestrating their flow across EU external borders for political motives.

We see the cooperation with international organisations such as the UNHCR as key in optimising efforts and maximising synergies, especially in tackling the root causes of forced displacement. In this context, it is essential to further enhance the synergies and coordination between State actors and international organisations on the ground.

It is of the utmost importance that we create safe legal pathways for those who need protection. Positive outcomes can only be secured through multilateral cooperation and mutually beneficial partnerships among all stakeholders.

Thank you.