

**United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees**  
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**Programme**  
**Palais des Nations, Geneva**  
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**General Debate**  
**DRAFT STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF IRELAND**

*Mr Michael Gaffey*  
*Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations, Geneva*

High Commissioner, Madam Chair,

Ireland aligns with the statement by the European Union.

We commend the High Commissioner on his opening statement and thank him and all his colleagues at UNHCR who continually demonstrate their tireless commitment to the protection of those who are most affected by conflict and crisis across the world. We also welcome the remarks of World Bank CEO, Ms Kristalina Georgieva. It is encouraging to see the World Bank's growing involvement in displacement crises globally.

The past year has seen growing challenges to the multilateralism- a system which was designed to preserve peace and security and to help avert ever more destructive conflict and crisis. And those who have felt the strongest impact of the challenge have been the most vulnerable: refugees who have been forced to leave behind their homes, communities and livelihoods.

It is a matter for concern that while UNHCR's budget increases year after year, the amount spent per refugee per day continues to decline. Inevitably, certain crises receive more attention and funding than others, and therefore the quality of assistance that can be provided to refugees can vary from region to region. For this reason, among many others, Ireland will continue to advocate for the increased use of multi-annual unearmarked funding, which allows organisations

to allocate resources based on their independent assessment of greatest need. Ireland has boosted its funding to UNHCR in recent years, and we will remain strongly committed to the vital work of the organisation in the period ahead.

In our history, Ireland has been a country of migration and displacement, most recently, however, as a destination. We understand the imperative to respond to the needs and wishes of refugees until they can return home in a safe, dignified and voluntary manner.

In response to the Syria crisis in particular, in September 2015 we launched the Irish refugee protection programme. Since then, we have resettled over 800 refugees in Ireland with more due to arrive in the coming weeks. In response to the UNHCR and European Commission pledging exercise on resettlement in 2018/2019, Ireland has pledged 1,200 resettlement places. In addition, a further 530 family members will be admitted during this period under our humanitarian admissions programme, which provides access for vulnerable family members of refugees and Irish citizens from the biggest refugee producing countries. UNHCR has been a crucial partner throughout these efforts.

Ireland recognises the importance of expressing solidarity with refugee hosting countries and this summer, in cooperation with a group of countries, Ireland announced the development of a new Community Based Refugee sponsorship Programme. This will allow communities in Ireland to engage more directly in refugee resettlement and integration efforts in partnership with the government and civil society while maintaining the rights-based approach which underpins all of our resettlement commitments. This approach develops powerful bonds between sponsors and refugees, and fosters more positive attitudes towards

refugees, as fellow global citizens rather than a perceived threat to be warded off or manipulated by the unscrupulous.

As donors, we ask a lot of the humanitarian agencies we support. In this regard, UNHCR is often one of the first to step up to the plate and tackle complex issues head on, acting as a role model for others to follow. For instance, UNHCR has been a leader in responding to sexual exploitation and abuse. This is an example of its genuine command of protection issues, and we would encourage all at UNHCR to maintain this focus as the UN system enters a new era in its own development.

Despite the suffering and challenges, 2018 has also been a year of some optimism. We would hope that, in years to come, we can look back on this as a significantly positive year for our engagement with displaced peoples. Following the New York Declaration, the two Global Compacts - for migrants and refugees- represent remarkable achievements in the face of an at times perniciously negative discourse.

The process leading to the Global Compact on Refugees itself has been a learning curve for us all. The generosity with which large host countries have welcomed refugees has been a guiding light in our work here. We look especially to the response of countries in Africa already tackling huge development challenges. The significance of the voices of refugees, host countries and civil society has been evidenced throughout, resulting in a compact that, despite the differing views and compromises, is ultimately shaped by the voices and experiences of those affected.

Our challenge now as an international community is to ensure that the Global Compact will fit together effectively with all the other pieces of the humanitarian and development ecosystem – and be fully coherent with the implementation of far-reaching reforms across the UN Development System. The needs and voices of refugees and the displaced will be vital for the success of our common efforts.

Thank you.