

STATEMENT

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Program (ExCom)

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High Commissioner Grandi,
Mr. Chair,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Assistant High Commissioner for Protection Volker Turk highly appreciated the remarks of Armenia along with other countries for the update of developments in the countries on processes regarding protection and statelessness determination.

It is already the second time that Armenia is being represented in this important forum as a full member, and I'm fortunate enough to speak for a country that has undergone significant changes in these past months. As a result of these changes our resolve to provide international protection to those in need not only did not decrease, but proved to be quite strong.

Mr. Chair,

We very much appreciate our good cooperation and ongoing dialogue with UNHCR colleagues on the ground, in Armenia, in the process of providing international protection to asylum seekers and refugees. I would like to underline our effective collaboration with both UNHCR office in our country and the regional office for the South Caucasus. This cooperation extends to various aspects of providing international protection in Armenia; starting from asylum processes and procedures and going all the way into integration programs and projects that have been quite successful.

Armenia has signed and duly ratified the international instruments connected with international protection, particularly 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol. Our national legislation has been amended ever since the first adoption of a Law on Refugees in 1999. The current Law on Refugees and Asylum has been consistently approximated with international standards in the area, which has also been recognized by our international partners.

An important area of cooperation with UNHCR that we value very much, is the reform of the asylum system in our country. Armenia participates in the program of Quality Initiative for Eastern Europe and South Caucasus, which contributes to the capacity building and further advancement of the asylum systems. The struggle between state

security and international protection is one that bodies dealing with refugee status determination wrestle with. Meanwhile, we duly note that the rights of no refugee should be harmed, with full appreciation of the state's security concerns. The correct modality between the security and the rights provides for success in this area. Furthermore, I would like to underline that asylum issues should not be merely discussed in legalistic terms, but also in policy terms. This approach might be less rigid and more enabling for providing protection for those in need without undermining state security.

Armenia is also fully committed to the UNHCR's global objective to end statelessness. After the legislative amendments our efforts are now concentrated on the establishment of statelessness determination procedures. We hope that UNHCR will support us in this area to put these procedures into full effect.

Mr. Chair,

In our view international protection issues should not be politicized, but a humanitarian approach should be taken. At the same time international protection issues should not be separated from integration efforts. Concerning integration programs, I would like to mention that they have been recently directed mainly towards refugees and people in refugee like situations from Syria, that have found protection in Armenia. This wave of forced displacement aggravated already complicated situation in terms of integration, as Armenia has already been dealing with thousands of refugees from other countries. Nevertheless, our country makes every effort to integrate a great number of Syrian refugees, becoming the third largest recipient of Syrian refugees per capita in Europe.

For a small and already densely populated country this is a huge issue. Nevertheless, the Government of Armenia has made a committed decision to integrate these people and provide them with every right and opportunity that our citizens enjoy. We view the refugees from Syria as an asset. With their great talent in entrepreneurship and crafts they have already started to play a noticeable role in the economic development of the country.

Meanwhile, I would like to underline though that one very complex issue still remains on the table and that issue is housing. Providing livable housing is the first step towards successful integration. Hence, in this particular issue we would appreciate the support of our international colleagues.

Mr. Chair,

In the recent decade numerous conflicts have erupted in the world creating huge numbers of refugees. The UNHCR has dealt with these issues with dignity and perseverance. I would like to express the gratitude of our Government for this service and dedication.

Thank you.