



**Statement by Nepal during the General Debate, 71st Session of the
Executive Committee of the UNHCR**

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Mr. Chairman,

Nepal extends its profound thanks and appreciation to the High Commissioner for his comprehensive statement on the global situation of forced displacement, also highlighting the context of COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts on the lives of refugees and stateless and displaced persons.

We commend the High Commissioner for his visible leadership during the time of crisis. We also note the successful hosting of the first ever Global Refugee Forum in December 2019. We commend UNHCR's firm commitment to respond to emergencies and humanitarian situations faced by almost 80 million forcibly displaced persons around the world.

Nepal appreciates various initiatives taken by UNHCR under COVID-19 appeal for the preparedness, prevention and response activities to address the immediate public health needs of refugees and displaced persons.

Measures such as reinforcing the health and WASH systems and services; supporting governments with infection prevention and health-care response; distributing shelter material and core relief items; offering guidance and information on prevention measures are vitally important in response to the pandemic.

We call for enhanced international cooperation and solidarity to address the plight of refugees and other vulnerable groups during these challenging times.

Migrants are also among the disproportionately affected people requiring effective support for their access to social and health needs.

Mr. Chairman,

In Nepal, the Government has implemented COVID-19 preparedness and response plan with inclusive response measures that covers refugee protection and assistance needs in line with our commitment to leaving no one behind.

Nepal underlines that additional burden to refugee-hosting developing countries, particularly LDCs, goes beyond their very limited capacity as their situation has further exacerbated due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Nepal has provided shelter for thousands of Bhutanese refugees for decades on humanitarian grounds. Despite our limited capacity, difficult domestic situation, and pressing national challenges, we have done our best to ensure their protection over the last 30 years.

Nepal's sincere efforts so far to find a lasting solution to the problem of Bhutanese refugees with the refugees right to return in safe and with dignity have produced no outcome due to the continued rigidity and non-implementation of the agreed decisions by the Bhutanese side. However, we have been making repeated calls for the resumption of the stalled process and the repatriation of all remaining refugees.

Meanwhile, Nepal deeply appreciates the Core Group of Countries for their support in the third country resettlement of the Bhutanese refugees. We are grateful for their generosity.

Nepal commends UNHCR's continued support and care to the refugees. We are also thankful to the World Food Programme, donor community and all other relevant agencies for their support in the protection and care of the refugee population.

Nepal reiterates its position that safe, secure and dignified repatriation of refugees to their homeland on a voluntary basis is the only durable solution to the problem.

We call upon the international community to act timely and comprehensively for protecting refugees' right to return to their homeland and ensuring their effective rehabilitation under all circumstances.

It is crucial that countries of origin take the primary responsibility for establishing conditions that allow voluntary repatriation of refugees in safety and with dignity.

Thank you.