

UNHCR Executive Committee 71st Session (5–9 October 2020)
Agenda item 3: General debate

Mr. Chairman, Mr. High Commissioner, distinguished Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,
Slovakia fully aligns itself with the statement made by the European Union on behalf of the EU and its Member States.

At the outset I wish to thank the High Commissioner for his comprehensive overview that reflects the successes and challenges of the past year, including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on refugees and other people of concern.

Indeed, since the beginning of 2020, **the COVID-19 pandemic** has caused an unprecedented global public health emergency all around the world. Its effects have been most acutely felt by populations already affected by humanitarian crises and conflict, including refugees and internally displaced persons. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused disruption in the implementation of resettlement and assisted voluntary return and reintegration programmes as well as in the support provided to third countries. In the context of economic recession and increasing challenges for maintaining social cohesion, the COVID-19 crisis is likely to have long-term impact on refugee populations.

We commend the UNHCR for not stopping its work throughout the global pandemic, but rather immediately scaling up its support to refugee populations and their local communities. Ending the COVID-19 pandemic must include a broad global commitment to ensuring that all people – including refugees – are protected, in the spirit of the Global Compact on Refugees. We count on the Agency's continued proactive leadership in confronting these challenges working with governments, which lead the coronavirus response. Slovakia is ready to support the High Commissioner and his office in this regard.

Mr. Chairman,

The first-ever **Global Refugee Forum** held last December led to a set of wide-ranging and substantial commitments to improve the lives of almost 26 million refugees and to support the communities that host them. Nine months on since the Forum, progress has been made towards the implementation of these pledges, initiatives and Support Platforms. Going forward, we must ensure that commitments made in GRF are respected despite the global challenges posed by the pandemic. Slovakia will continue working with partners to jointly address forced displacement, including through the follow up to the first Global Refugee Forum.

Mr. Chairman,

Number of **internally displaced people** reaches record high. According to Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre 14.6 million new internal displacements across 127 countries were detected in the first six months of 2020. Although responding to internal displacement is a responsibility of the states, we believe this multidimensional issue requires as much global attention and collective action as refugees.

We therefore take note with appreciation of the work of the **High Level Panel on Internal Displacement**. My delegation is hopeful the Panel will deliver tangible, concrete and ambitious recommendations for durable solutions. Nevertheless, political will and commitment remains critical for their effective and successful implementation.

It is important to note that more and more people flee their homelands due to natural disasters and adverse effects of the **climate change**. The Global Compact on Refugees, directly addresses this growing concern by recognizing that “*climate, environmental degradation and natural disasters increasingly interact with the drivers of refugee movements.*” Slovakia supports the UNHCR’s role in raising awareness about climate change as driver of displacement and encourages the Agency to continue its work in this area.

It should furthermore be underlined that better support for refugees, IDPs, stateless persons and host communities depends on the **availability of complete and reliable data**. Only evidence-based analyses can lead to informed decisions and effective policies. Successful implementation of the Data transformation strategy plays important role in this direction. Slovakia also welcomes the UNHCR’s cooperation with the World Bank in the framework of the Joint Data Centre on Forced Displacement.

Mr. Chairman,

As has been observed before, 1% of humanity lives now in forced exile. UNHCR is the UN agency mandated by the UN General Assembly to provide international protection, assist and seek solutions for populations of concern. That is why we need to continue to invest in a strong and effective UN Refugee Agency, so that it can play its important role in the multilateral system at a time of record displacement. In this regard, Slovakia fully supports its **institutional reform** aimed at strengthening the organization and better positioning it to deliver on its mandate.

In conclusion: The issue of escalating number of refugees will not be fully resolved for as long as we effectively address the causes of forced displacement. The Global Compact on Refugees provides a concrete framework for implementing the **humanitarian-development-peace nexus** concept, which should be followed to coherently address people’s vulnerability before, during and after crises. We also need to make greater collective effort to advance on our central commitment of the **2030 Agenda** to leave no one behind.

Finally, as we celebrate the **75th anniversary of the United Nations this year**, Slovakia will continue to support the UN as an indispensable forum for multilateral solutions to global challenges.

Thank you for your attention.