

**COUNTRY STATEMENT BY DR. HOSSEIN ZOLFAGHARI,**  
**DEPUTY MINISTER OF SECURITY AND LAW ENFORCEMENT**  
**OF THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN**

*71th Session of the UNHCR Executive Committee*  
*October 2020*

**In the Name of God**

Honorable Chair, High Commissioner of the United Nations, Your Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,

At the outset, I would like to begin my speech with a poem by the Persian-language poet, Sa'adi Shirazi whose works swept the lands and shone like a torch at the United Nations:

*"Human beings are members of a whole  
In creation of one essence and soul  
If one member is afflicted with pain  
Other members uneasy will remain  
If you have no sympathy for human pain  
The name of human you cannot retain"*

This beautiful poem is a manifestation of altruism in ancient Persian literature, the message of which is necessary and vital for human society in our time.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

The Islamic Republic of Iran, as one of the major countries hosting the most extensive refugee status in the world, has hosted a large number of refugees for more than 4 decades. Of course, the increasing needs of refugees on the one hand; the intensification of unilateral coercive measures, as well as the outbreak of Corona disease on the other hand, has seriously undermined the capacity of the Islamic Republic of Iran to support refugees. We are witnessing a staggering increase in costs, especially in the field of health care during the corona outbreak, and with these conditions, there is no reasonable balance between the direct and indirect costs of the Islamic Republic of Iran and international aid.

Despite calls from the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the European Union's foreign policy chief to lift sanctions, at least in the wake of the Corona pandemic, we are unfortunately witnessing escalation of United States

coercive actions. These measures have been a major obstacle to access to education and livelihood services for vulnerable individuals, including refugees, as well as the medical, therapeutic and pharmaceutical equipment needed to prevent and deal with Corona disease in the host and refugee community.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, of course, has continued to provide services in other areas, in this regard, some of the services provided to this needy population are mentioned below:

- ✓ Enrollment of 500,080 students in public schools in the last academic year for free;
- ✓ Enrollment of 138,000 undocumented students in the last academic year in public schools for free;
- ✓ Training of 32,614 literate students by holding literacy courses;
- ✓ Enrollment of 50,000 students in the last academic year in the country's universities and take the necessary measures to continue their education in the next academic year;
- ✓ Establish a public health insurance mechanism for the benefit of all refugees and cover 100,000 vulnerable groups, mainly specific patients, using the free medical services booklet with the financial support of the UNHCR and the Islamic Republic of Iran;
- ✓ Prevent the spread of Covid-19 disease among refugees through active diagnostic measures and access to treatment for the disease, free of charge, like Iranians;

Honorable Chair,

The Islamic Republic of Iran has always supported "voluntary return", "sustainable reintegration" and "resettlement" of refugees as the most important and sustainable solution, while according to a recent report by the UNHCR, "voluntary return of refugees" in 2019 worldwide Compared to the previous year, unfortunately, it shows a decrease of 46%. Also, according to the latest report, unfortunately, about 5% of refugees in the world were accepted as part of the "resettlement" solution last year.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Given the increasing number of refugees worldwide and the hosting and support of more than 86% of the world's refugees by developing countries, despite their lack of resources and economic problems, it is now more important than ever to accept collective responsibility for hosting and supporting refugees by Member States in accordance with the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Additional Protocol.

Honorable Chair, Distinguished Audience,

Finally, while appreciating the solidarity and assistance of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as well as donor countries and other donors in supporting the activities of the Islamic Republic of Iran to support refugees, especially in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic; it is necessary and expected to state the following:

- 1- Action of the international community and humanitarian institutions in order to reduce unilateral coercive measures and remove obstacles in sending humanitarian aid to the needy;
- 2- Mobilizing resources and increasing the assistance of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in cooperation with relevant partners in order to provide an effective response to sanctions and economic threats against refugees and host communities;
- 3- Fair participation of all members of the international community and special attention of the High Commissioner for Refugees to the challenges in the field of “voluntary return” and “resettlement” through the preparation and development of a work plan for the results of the Executive Committee;
- 4- Accelerating the process of voluntary return of refugees and their permanent reintegration in Afghanistan, as well as accepting more refugees from Iran in the form of resettlement in third countries;

Thank you for your attention.