

**U.S. Delegation Statement**  
**Agenda Item 3. PLENARY**  
**Delivered by Nancy Izzo Jackson, Senior Bureau Official**  
**Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration**  
**72<sup>nd</sup> Session of the UNHCR Executive Committee**  
**October 4, 2021**

**(694 words)**

- Madame Chair,
- I am very pleased to be leading the United States delegation to the 72<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Executive Committee of UNHCR. I would like to focus my remarks on a few issues that drive our current engagement in the international humanitarian response to refugees.
- First, our commitment to reasserting American leadership to resettle refugees has never been stronger for those whom resettlement is the best durable solution. A robust refugee admissions program is critical to U.S. humanitarian and national security objectives; it is a touchstone of the Biden-Harris Administration's commitment to rebuilding safe, orderly, humane, and lawful migration policies. Refugee resettlement is among the most visible manifestations of a values-based foreign policy, and an abiding symbol of solidarity with refugees and the countries hosting them, providing a beacon of hope for persecuted people around the world. To this end, President Biden has affirmed the United States' commitment to welcoming refugees by proposing the admission of up to 125,000 refugees in Fiscal Year 2022, the highest annual number in nearly three decades. We hope other Member States will join us in renewing and expanding commitments to this essential protection tool.
- Second, events over the past 18 months show us all too clearly that many of the biggest crises we face respect no borders and must be met with collective action. The COVID-19 pandemic remains a major global emergency for our humanitarian populations of concern, alongside a very large percentage of the people in the countries that host them. The United States has been actively focused on preventing the spread of COVID-19 and has supported programs that respond to the increase in COVID-related threats to protection from gender-based violence and mental health challenges, as well as

maintaining education programs during the pandemic. My bureau alone – the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration at the U.S. Department of State – provided nearly \$447 million over the past year for the COVID-19 response through 37 partner agencies working with forcibly displaced people in 74 countries. Of this amount, UNHCR received nearly \$215 million. One of our COVID-19 response priorities this year was to increase the number of agreements with our NGO partners where they have a comparative advantage to address specific COVID-19 response gaps in programming. And we succeeded – funding 29 different NGOs – four times as many as last year.

- Third, we are reassessing and realigning our commitments to current global trends and realities. For example, climate change. Consistent with President Biden returning the United States to the Paris Agreement, we recognize that the impacts of climate change are here now. Climate-induced migration and displacement are only going to become more pronounced, impacting vulnerable populations in particular. We do not have a moment to waste to ensure our response is effective, thoughtful, and strategic. We commend the work UNHCR has undertaken to develop its strategic framework for climate action.
- Additionally, addressing the protection challenges faced by vulnerable LGBTQI+ persons is a vital part of the Biden-Harris Administration’s commitment to advancing the human rights of LGBTQI+ persons around the world. We look forward to making a commitment related to LGBTQI+ persons of concern at UNHCR’s High Level Officials meeting this December, which may include, amongst other support, additional referral and sponsorship pathways for LGBTQI+ refugees to be resettled in the United States.
- In closing, the United States remains grateful for the tireless efforts of humanitarian workers who every day risk their lives and personal safety on behalf of the forcibly displaced. We will continue to support protection for humanitarian workers. We call on parties to armed conflict to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law, including those related to the protection of civilians and medical personnel. And we will take every action to support humanitarian organizations and to promote respect for their independence and neutrality. To UNHCR leadership, staff, and partners alike – as we commemorate this year the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Refugee Convention – we applaud your devotion to the cause we all serve:

the life-saving protection of refugees and the forcibly displaced, and the promotion of the solutions that allow them to lead their lives in freedom, in safety, and with dignity.

- Thank you, Madame Chair.