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Statement by the Government of Finland

Delivered by Ms. Kirsti Kauppi, Permanent Representative of Finland to the UN in Geneva

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

Finland aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

The global humanitarian situation remains critical. Finland is grateful to host countries and communities – especially in protracted situations – for their response to increasing needs.

We also commend UNHCR and its partners for continuing to protect refugees and other persons of concern in various conflicts, recently in Afghanistan.

It is important to remain committed to Afghanistan. Finland has suspended development funding, but will continue humanitarian aid. We are currently exploring the possibility of increasing our humanitarian contributions. Recently we contributed 3 million euros to UNHCR's Afghanistan Situation Supplementary Appeal.

We are following carefully how humanitarian organizations, including their female workers, are able to operate in Afghanistan. UNHCR's regular updates are useful in this regard.

Conflicts together with COVID-19 have created distress worldwide. People have lost their livelihoods and been pushed further into poverty. Women and persons in vulnerable situations are bearing the brunt. We need focused efforts to build their capacity, confidence and skills.

The recently introduced SEREDA project examined the nature of GBV experienced by forced migrants. The findings are worrisome. Half of over 82 million forcibly displaced people are women and it is estimated that over 70 % of them have experienced GBV. Women face specific vulnerabilities but also men, boys, gender and sexual minorities have heightened exposure. GBV services must therefore be in place from the onset of any response, with qualified staff and resources.

Despite the pandemic, Finland has carried out its resettlement efforts in schedule. Last year we announced the increase of our refugee quota for both 2020 and 2021 and now, acknowledging the situation especially in Afghanistan, Finland is considering a further increase for 2022. We see resettlement as a solidarity mechanism towards host countries and refugees. Safe and legal pathways can ease the pressure towards irregular migration and contribute to humane treatment of migrants and restoration of family links.

In many countries, migrants and refugees face hostility and xenophobia. Efforts are needed to counter racism and discrimination and foster social inclusion. In Finland, civil society and volunteers play an active role in integrating refugees. We are committed to strengthening social inclusion of refugees and our co-operation with civil society.

As the number of internally displaced persons is growing fast, it was timely that the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel published its final report last week. It is important to identify concrete recommendations on IDP crises. The value of this report will be seen through its follow-up. We encourage all to seize this momentum to work on solutions to the IDP challenge.

As a long-standing advocate of the rights of persons with disabilities, Finland is pleased to witness UNHCR's progress in disability inclusion at strategic and operational levels. We encourage UNHCR to continue leading by example, to ensure that no one is left behind.

Finland is a committed supporter of UNHCR and believes in non-earmarked funding. We encourage other donors in this regard, since non-earmarked funding enables organizations like UNHCR to respond to crises without delay.

At the same time, we urge all parties to allow rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access and to respect the International Law and principles. Without this, we cannot ensure the protection of those in need or those who are providing help in ever more challenging circumstances.

Thank you.