

**CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY!**

**UNHCR Executive Committee**  
**73<sup>th</sup> Session, 10-14 October 2022, Geneva**  
**Agenda item 3 General debate**

**STATEMENT BY BULGARIA**

Distinguished Chairperson,  
Distinguished High Commissioner,  
Excellences,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Republic of Bulgaria aligns with the statement of the EU and its Member States and has the following comments in a national capacity.

Distinguished High Commissioner, we welcome the extension of your **term of office for further two and a half years and** wish you, in these very challenging times, a successful continuation of efforts in search of solutions for the world's refugees, IDPs and stateless people, and the communities hosting them.

We are also looking forward to the upcoming arrival in Sofia of the recently **appointed new UNHCR representative to Bulgaria, Ms. Seda Kusucu, and stand ready** to continue our effective interaction with her office.

*Bulgaria notes with concern that in 2022 the forced displacement continue to reach new record levels and hundreds of million of people continue to flee from war, persecution, violation of human rights and to fear for their life.*

Russia's war in Ukraine provoked a huge displacement, human and humanitarian crisis in Europe and we would like to confirm our continuing solidarity with neighbouring countries. We are appalled by the recent massive missile strikes by Russian armed forces targeting Kyiv and other Ukrainian cities, which resulted in numerous civilian casualties and destruction of critical civilian infrastructure, vital to the survival of the Ukrainian population during the winter period. Bulgaria strongly condemns these new brutal violations of IHL which may entail further waves of Ukrainians leaving their homes.

**We welcome the UNHCR efforts in helping Ukrainian refugees and the courage of its staff to stay and deliver in Ukraine.**

From the beginning of the war until October 3<sup>rd</sup> 782 043 **Ukrainians entered** Bulgaria. around 138 000 (137 693) people are registered for temporary protection under the EU Temporary Protection Directive. More than 54 500 (54 579) people remain in Bulgaria of whom 21 659 are minors.

The Bulgarian government took a number of measures to address the challenges, including through legislative amendments. Ukrainian citizens with temporary protection have access to labour market; they enjoy guaranteed access to medical care same as for Bulgarian citizens; accommodation, social welfare assistance and education.

We welcome the very good bilateral cooperation with UNHCR in this regard and acknowledge positively its contribution with the Blue Dot initiative implemented in cooperation with UNICEF and the implementation together with the Bulgarian Red Cross of the Cash for Protection programme.

*Bulgaria also continues to pay attention to situations of concern in other parts of the world and provides asylum without any discrimination when the requirements for granting international protection are met.*

We express preoccupation with the lack of progress in tackling the root causes of forced displacement in the **Middle East and North Africa**. Continued conflicts, crises and instability across the region affected negatively refugees, IDPs as well as their hosting communities. Many countries in the region have continued to provide protection, assistance and inclusive policies to support forcibly displaced population and we commend their solidarity. *The situation in Syria* remains of particular concern.

**In Asia and Pacific** we draw attention to the humanitarian and security challenges faced by *Afghanistan*. I would like to reiterate Bulgaria's continuing support, including financially, of the UNHCR's role in the implementation of the *Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) in the Afghan displacement situation*

We encourage UNHCR to continue its work inside those countries to remove the obstacles to voluntary return of refugees in safety and dignity.

**African countries continue** to face significant challenges of forced displacement, due to protracted and escalating conflicts across the continent, exacerbated by the impact of climate change. We welcome UNHCR large presence throughout Africa and increased partnership with development actors and international financial institutions. We do not forget the tremendous efforts of hosting states to provide protection of their brothers and sisters.

We acknowledge that the experience of displacement or statelessness can lead to an increased prevalence of mental health conditions and challenges to psychosocial well-being. We stress the relevance in that regard of the 2022 ExCom conclusion. Let me join others in stating our appreciation for the excellent work of the Rapporteur and express hope that the conclusions will be adopted by consensus at the end of the meeting this week.

We commend UNHCR for its will and efforts to strengthen strategic planning, risk management and programming based on results and to continue its internal reforms. We encourage UNHCR to continue to prioritize the needs of those in most vulnerable situation – women and children. We share UNHCR’s commitment to combatting discrimination and to advocating secured access to education for forcibly displaced and stateless children, especially girls.

Finally, we reiterate Bulgaria’s commitment to the Global Compact on Refugees and to its goals. We are looking forward to the second Global Refugee Forum in 2023, and based on the experience and lessons learned from the first round, to reaffirming our joint commitment to work together towards a global solidarity and burden and responsibility sharing.