

**Statement by the Kingdom of the Netherlands at the 71<sup>st</sup> session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme (5-9 October 2019)**

- Thank you Chair, thank you, High Commissioner Grandi.
- We align ourselves with the statement delivered on behalf of the EU and its Member States.
- The Netherlands commends UNHCR for its flexible and swift response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and we express our appreciation to your staff for staying and delivering, including at their own personal risk. We express our sincere condolences towards family and colleagues of those staff members who lost their lives.
- Chair, many states have taken necessary actions to limit the spread of COVID-19, including border measures. Recognizing the national competence of states in taking these steps, we stress that these measures must remain temporary, proportional and balanced and in accordance with International Law, including the principle of *non-refoulement*.
- Voluntary return is part and parcel of a well-functioning global system of international protection, and an important durable solution, particularly given that return is often the preferred solution of refugees themselves. It should always take place in safety and dignity, based on a free and informed decision, and we commend UNHCR for taking a principled approach on this.

- We also commend UNHCR's significant efforts, incl. through you, High Commissioner Grandi, on the integration of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support activities in UNHCR's work, including in the COVID-19 response.
- We are very pleased to see MHPSS included in the workplan of the ExCom conclusions, as MHPSS must be an innate element in ensuring protection of persons of concern.
- Chair, the Netherlands continues to support the principles set out in the GCR and we welcome the continuous efforts by the GRF team to match and ensure the implementation of pledges. We stress the need for accountability, and welcome the over 300 submissions made on their follow-up but also note this still leaves a significant number of pledges not reported on. We encourage all those who have made pledges to share progress on their implementation.
- As we all know the world has drastically changed over the past year, in a way we did not foresee when the GRF took place. There is currently no separate workstream on health, and we look forward to hearing how health as a topic will be embedded and mainstreamed in the GRF framework.
- Chair, we share UNHCR's concern on the significant funding gap and regret that most of the contributions to UNHCR come from only a limited number of donors. We encourage UNHCR to continue broadening its donor base, also including non-traditional donors. Additionally, we encourage all UN Member States to meet their

commitments to the Funding Compact, by raising the quality of support to the UN-system.

- In the meantime, The Netherlands remains a strong supporter of the work of UNHCR and its mandate. We will continue our multi-year, unearmarked contribution of 33 mln Euro until 2021, and encourage other donors to provide similar unearmarked funds. Equally, we call on UNHCR to provide partners with similarly predictable and multi-year financing, including overhead and capacity strengthening.
- Moreover, UNHCR remains a cornerstone in the Netherlands-initiated Prospects Partnership, receiving over 110 million Euro. This Partnership on jobs & livelihoods is instrumental in building the humanitarian-development nexus in the framework of protracted displacement crises.
- The Netherlands commends UNHCR's continued investment and efforts to expand on similar partnerships, including with International Financial Institutions.
- In addition, the Netherlands is making new multi-year contributions to UNHCR in Libya and Tunisia for a total of 7 mln Euro, over a period of 3 years, assisting access to refugee status determination procedures, durable solutions and protection.
- Chair, as highlighted during your NGO consultations last week, the inclusion of refugee led organizations is key to an effective response. In light of the 'Participation Revolution' as well as

localization under the Grand Bargain, we encourage UNHCR to continue work on ensuring meaningful participation of refugee communities, and to work with local and refugee led organizations. Not just as implementing partners, but also in design and programming, and assist in their capacity building so they benefit from the *know how* of UNHCR.

- Chair, turning to institutional affairs, The Netherlands is fully supportive of the transformation UNHCR has undertaken, including the regionalization and the establishment of a new Results Based Management Framework. We look forward to seeing the results and impact of these processes in the coming years, including a cost-benefit analysis.
- We also underline the importance of alignment with the UNDS-reforms in UNHCR's transformation process and call on UNHCR to make progress towards compliance with, and reporting of, the Funding Compact commitments, which relate to the increased efficiency, effectiveness, and transparency of UNDS entities.
- Moreover, we underscore once more the need for a continuous system-wide effort in fighting Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harrassment. The recent allegations made about sexual abuse in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has our highest attention.
- Aid organisations must have robust systems and well-trained staff in place, to prevent these abuses from happening, and be able to act swiftly and sensitively when they do. Most importantly, people

must feel safe reporting incidents they experience or witness, and confident that good processes will be followed upon their reports.

- We strongly support the High Commissioner and Deputy High Commissioner in their relentless efforts to eradicate SEAH both internally as well as system-wide, and encourage UNHCR to timely investigate and report allegations, including through the appropriate UN mechanisms.
- In closing, the Netherlands once again stresses our strong support to UNHCR, and the vital work that you do, and you can count on us for our continued partnership.

I thank you Chair.