

check against delivery

**Statement by the Republic of Poland in the general debate at the 71st session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme - UNHCR
(Geneva, 5-9 October 2020)**

Honourable High Commissioner, Mr. Chair, Distinguished Participants,

Poland aligns itself with the statement delivered by the EU.

We highly value UNHCR's involvement to continue providing critical assistance to its persons of concern under current health emergency circumstances. In this respect Poland fully agrees that multilateral efforts need to be further strengthened in a spirit of cooperation and solidarity.

To this end let me reiterate my country's strong support for the Appeal for a Global Ceasefire announced by the UN Secretary-General.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me share with you **how international protection requirements have been handled by Poland domestically during the COVID-19 pandemic.**

In a situation of economic lock down and closure of borders, legislative solutions have been adopted for the benefit of foreigners legally residing in Poland, enabling them to stay and work legally. We also continued with the asylum and return procedures under the new pandemic conditions.

In all reception centres for foreigners in Poland, necessary health security solutions have been applied, including by providing personal protection equipment and preparing premises for quarantine purposes. All information is communicated to foreigners, including through a dedicated hotline provided by the Polish Border Guard.

Mr. Chair,

Children seeking international protection remain at the centre of our attention. Among the EU countries, **Poland has the highest percentage of minors covered by applications for international protection.** Over the last two years the highest rate of minors enjoying any form of protection in Poland was recorded mainly among nationals from Ukraine, Russia and countries of Central Asia and Caucasus.

Mr. Chair,

It is important to note how Poland is seriously concerned about the current socio-political situation evolving in neighbouring Belarus, particularly in the aftermath of expressed social discontent following the results of the presidential elections held in August.

As we have to take into account possibility of significant increase in the influx of the citizens of Belarus and other people seeking protection in Poland, the Government took steps to facilitate entry for Belarusians.

This has already been communicated in a letter of 26 August 2020 by the Polish Ministry of the Interior and Administration addressed to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

By mid of September 157 citizens of Belarus used the opportunity to enter the territory of Poland and Polish Consulates have issued 600 humanitarian visas.

Furthermore, Poland developed a programme worth over EUR 12 million called “Solidarity with Belarus” in support for victims of protests, students and independent media.

Poland appreciates and further counts on UNHCR’s capacity to monitor the situation in the Eastern Europe and be able to react when it will be necessary.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Humanitarian agenda was among areas of priority during Poland’s mandate in the UN Security Council. In particular, special attention has been paid to practical measures for the protection of civilians. Moreover, Poland has a clear vision regarding **providing assistance directly on the ground where people in need live and stay.**

That is why Poland continues to support the EU MADAD fund, the Facility for Refugees in Turkey, the EUTF for Africa, as well as the UN agencies specializing in humanitarian aid.

In its humanitarian response Poland decided to **support in-kind projects aiming to provide over 650 Refugee Housing Units in Syria and Greece.** The emergency support for Greece was an example of our prompt action to shelter asylum seekers made homeless in a fire that devastated Moria Reception Centre in Lesbos.

Mr. Chair,

In 2020 Polish humanitarian response will further be focused on the Middle East countries, including Syria, Yemen, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraqi Kurdistan.

Moreover, this year, in a response to COVID-19 pandemic Poland contributed to the UNICEF Appeal, in order to protect children in Palestine, Iran, Ethiopia and Libya. Poland has also contributed to operationalize the UN Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19.

Furthermore, in a collective approach to fight the pandemic and its social and economic implications in the developing countries, **Poland joined the EU common package under the #Team Europe.** The package reaches out

to migrants, refugees as well their host communities. This is an initiative on solidarity and leadership in finding global solutions.

I thank you.