

**REPUBLIC OF MALTA**

**Statement by H.E. Christopher Grima, Permanent Representative, Permanent  
Representation of Malta to the UN and other Organisations**

**72<sup>nd</sup> Session of the UNHCR Executive Committee**

**Agenda Item 3 – General Debate  
4 – 6 October 2021**

*Check against delivery*

Chair,

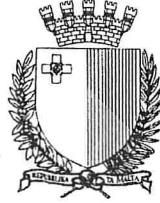
Malta aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union and would like to make some additional remarks in its national capacity.

As the world continues to grapple with the impact of COVID-19, the situation of refugees worldwide remains of concern. As the situation in Afghanistan has worsened, over half a million people have been displaced this year alone. Now we are seeing the number of Afghans trying to reach Europe on the increase. In this regard we express our sympathy and support for those forced to leave their homes as well as the communities that host them.

The situation in the Central Mediterranean also remains precarious. We have seen a significant number of arrivals for another year as the situation in Libya remains to be improved. Arrivals have reached 41,659 in 2021, compared to 22,984 arrivals in the same period last year – an increase of over 80%. 796 applications for asylum were launched in Malta to date this year. In 2020, Malta was the second EU Member State with the highest number of first-time asylum applications per million population. In this regard we express our gratitude to Member States which have assisted with the relocation of persons disembarked in Malta.

The number of arrivals has stretched Malta's resources to the limit, particularly in light of the emergency measures that the Government of Malta needed to impose to successfully contain the spread of the COVID-19 virus. While the situation has improved and this containment has been successful overall, Malta's reception capabilities for migrants and asylum-seekers remain under significant pressure.

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PERMANENT MISSION OF THE  
REPUBLIC OF MALTA  
IN GENEVA

At the EU level, Malta looks forward to continuing to engage with our partners on the “New Pact on Asylum and Migration”, in order to renew European migration and asylum policy and ensure the right balance between solidarity and responsibility to better manage migration.

Indeed, Malta has always been a firm advocate for solidarity mechanisms that would enforce burden sharing and establish a predictable relocation mechanism. It has supported the UN Global Compact on Refugees since the beginning. Progress in the implementation of pledges made by the First Global Refugee Forum continues in areas such as the integration of migrants and refugees and targeted action for the inclusion of refugees in Malta’s labour market. In this regard we also look forward to the first High-Level Officials Meeting to be held in Geneva on 14-15 December 2021.

UNHCR has continued to be an invaluable partner in this context. We thank UNHCR for its continued assistance and cooperation and hope that this collaboration can be further strengthened.

Thank you