

68. UNHCR Executive Committee – GER Statement at the General Debate

*Mme Chair,
High Commissioner,
Excellencies,
Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

We wish to thank the High Commissioner for his opening remarks and align ourselves with the Statement delivered on behalf of the European Union and its Member States. As proud member of the “Group of Friends of the #iBelong Campaign to end Statelessness” we further align ourselves with the joint statement given on behalf of the group.

We highly welcome the adoption of the ExCom conclusion on machine-readable travel documents for refugees and stateless persons.

Since the New York Declaration was adopted the number of refugees worldwide has grown by yet another million people; and about 60% of all refugees continue to be hosted by only ten countries, putting disproportionate pressure on host countries and communities. Germany recognizes the tremendous efforts of major host countries be it in the Syria context, the Afghanistan context or in Africa; we stand by you and will continue our support.

We are still facing a crisis of solidarity which shows that the Global Compact on Refugees as basis for a more equitable international responsibility and burden sharing in the refugee context is needed more than ever. Germany calls upon all members of the UNHCR Executive Committee to engage constructively in the development of an ambitious and robust Global Compact on Refugees.

Acute and protracted displacement situations are illustrating the importance of protection in humanitarian emergencies. We commend UNHCR for its continuing efforts to provide protection and assistance to refugees in the Syria context, where conditions for a voluntary return in safety and dignity of refugees from neighbouring countries to Syria are still not met at present. We also support UNHCR in its efforts to advocate for alternatives to detention in Libya – detention of refugees and asylum seekers is not acceptable and all efforts need to be undertaken to ensure protection and durable solutions in Libya. Similarly, we laude UNHCR for its engagement to ensure assistance and protection of refugees from Myanmar in neighbouring countries, particularly responding to the worsening situation at the Myanmar-Bangladesh border. A situation, where UNHCR due to its unique mandate is particularly needed.

However, underfunding of humanitarian appeals will remain a reality also in 2018, which can only be addressed both from the “supply and demand side”: On the one hand, it will be key to prioritise particularly vulnerable target groups. On the other hand, we call upon all

donors to fulfil their commitments and pledges, for example made at the Syria conferences in London and Brussels.

In response to the ongoing pressing needs Germany has become UNHCR's second largest bilateral donor. We are very happy that we could again increase our contributions to the operations of UNHCR this year. Germany was one of the first donors to directly support UNHCR in initiating the CRRF, and we stand ready to constructively accompany the process both in Geneva and in the CRRF countries, through the whole range of instruments at our disposal: politically, diplomatically, through our stabilisation measures, humanitarian assistance, transitional assistance and long-term support of structural and social processes as well as through direct support to UNHCR's mandate to initiate and develop the CRRF. In order to establish the CRRF as the new global standard for addressing large refugee situations it will be crucial to showcase its potential in the 11 countries of implementation and Germany commends the 11 refugee hosting countries that signed up for being the first ones to apply this sustainable and comprehensive approach. Your participation will, and should, substantially inform the process towards the Global Compact on Refugees.

As eighth largest refugee hosting country, Germany has lived up to its global responsibility by providing protection to 1 million refugees and admitting refugees and family members through legal pathways such as resettlement and family reunification. Germany calls upon all states to support UNHCR activities by providing legal alternatives to irregular onward movements –including the use of resettlement schemes and other alternative legal pathways for asylum seekers stranded in Transit Countries. Germany takes a leading role in this regard and will co-host the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement in 2018.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In the light of ever increasing needs and constrained resources, it has become more important than ever for UNHCR to prioritize, increase efficiency and effectiveness. UNHCR should primarily focus on its core humanitarian mandate. In this regard, we welcome UNHCR's efforts to implement its Strategic Directions and conduct a Management Review towards improved organizational structures and processes.

[But, it is clear that humanitarian assistance can only address humanitarian needs; in order to prevent and substantially reduce humanitarian needs, much more must be done. We welcome the intensified partnership of non-humanitarian actors with host countries, notably the World Bank's and other development actors' engagement towards more sustainable solutions for protracted situations of forced displacement. Germany has broad experience in closely linking humanitarian and development-oriented responses to refugee situations worldwide and encourages both dimensions to be considered in refugee responses. Strengthened and early engagement of development actors will also allow UNHCR to prioritize and focus primarily on humanitarian needs and refugee protection, while leading the way to the coordination of humanitarian and development responses.

Germany calls upon UNHCR to continue its active contribution and commitment to humanitarian reform processes such as the Grand Bargain. Specifically, we appreciate UNHCR's participation in our pilot project for a harmonized and simplified reporting. As new members of the Grand Bargain Facilitation Group, we are happy to join forces with UNHCR.

We also commend UNHCR's efforts in removing barriers to inclusion in humanitarian responses, and in mainstreaming community-based and participatory protection approaches that are sensitive to gender, age and disability. [At the World Humanitarian Summit Germany committed to ensure that humanitarian programming is gender responsive and to only fund projects that include a gender analysis with sex and age disaggregated data by 2018. Germany endorsed the Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action and committed toward its implementation.

Madame Chair,

One major challenge we face is the diverse nature of forced displacement, and the vast number of internally displaced persons that need to be considered when looking for truly durable solutions. IDPs in many cases live in direct proximity to a conflict, outside of their communal network and in countries whose governments are often either absent or parties to the conflict, which leaves the internally displaced particularly vulnerable and makes it particularly difficult for development actors to support them. We welcome UNHCR's increased commitment to address protection and assistance needs of IDPs. And we believe that the 20th Anniversary of the IDP Guidelines in 2018 will be the right moment to increase our commitment for addressing the plight of IDPs.

In addition, every year millions of people are displaced by disasters. [Such disaster displacement, both internally and across borders, is one of the most pressing humanitarian challenges of the 21st century.] As chair of the Platform on Disaster Displacement, Germany urgently calls for better protection for people who are displaced in the context of disaster and the effects of climate change! States need to prepare for cross-border displacement of persons, building on these existing effective practices at the national and regional levels with a strong focus on humanitarian protection measures. We particularly appreciate the cooperation with UNHCR in this regard.

The current dimension of forced displacement demands immediate, coordinated and effective action. Germany will remain highly engaged and is committed to the adoption of an ambitious and robust Global Compact on Refugees as well as to continued support for UNHCR's endeavor to protect and assist the world's displaced people.

I thank you.