

STATEMENT OF H.E. MS. DEYANA KOSTADINOVA, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA TO THE UN AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN GENEVA, AT THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE 69th SESSION OF THE UNHCR EXCOM

3 October 2018, Geneva

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Let me first express our deepest condolences to the Indonesian delegation for the heavy loss of life caused by the devastating earthquake and tsunami. Our thoughts are with the people of Indonesia during this difficult period.

Madam Chair,

Bulgaria aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union to which I would like to add some points in my national capacity.

We are witnessing a massive shift of humanity unlike any seen before. Today millions of people around the world are displaced from their homes. All refugees have suffered unimaginable loss, whether they are displaced in their own country or seeking safety overseas.

The refugee crisis is a human crisis: Behind the statistics are people filled with unique life experiences and dreams for the future. They are mothers longing to return home, fathers yearning to work again, children searching for a childhood. Their story is our story, because we are all human. Everyone has the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge, with the option to return home in safety and dignity one day.

Madam Chair,

Bulgaria actively participated in the process towards the elaboration of the GCR. We welcome the advanced draft of the GCR as setting out measures for States and other relevant stakeholders to better share responsibility and cooperate more effectively in the response to large-scale movements of refugees and protracted situations. We consider the advanced draft as a balanced result of the interactive and inclusive drafting process successfully led by UNHCR.

Bulgaria supports the legally non-binding nature of the Compact and the voluntary character of the contributions of the countries in coping with large-scale refugee flows, taking into account the national realities and level of development of the individual countries as well as national policies and priorities.

We consider positively the increased inclusion of people with disabilities among vulnerable groups, the existence of a clear guiding principle of the national element in providing assistance in the emergence of refugee crises, the focus on the root

causes of refugee flows, the key role of voluntary return as the most preferred option, etc.

Madam Chair,

The refugee and migrant situations have increased in scope, scale and complexity in recent years and clearly shown the need of comprehensive solution not only at global but also at regional level.

The Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the EU held in the first half of this year continued the efforts to find appropriate solutions in all related EU policy areas. Our aim was to accelerate the ongoing reform of the Common European Asylum System. For us the main objective of this reform was the establishment of a new system that would allow for anticipatory and preventive action at EU level so as to prevent new crises and ensure appropriate measures for massive and protracted refugee situations. We were guided by the principle that each system - regional and global ones must be predictable and ensure a balance between the principles of responsibility and solidarity. Our efforts were to achieve maximum progress on all six files under discussion in the Council or with the European Parliament.

Under the Dublin Regulation, the Bulgarian Presidency proposed a comprehensive mechanism for sustainable crisis management - with clear criteria for defining pressure, allocation of responsibilities and a set of measures to address the challenges even before a crisis occurs. Serious progress was made in the discussions on the Procedural Regulation, with a number of controversial issues being resolved. At the end of our mandate, provisional political agreement was reached on three of the four files under negotiation with the European Parliament, since according to the package approach, the finalisation of the procedure and the approval of the agreement reached should be made after agreement on all the files including the Dublin Regulation.

We will keep the momentum and advocate for continued efforts to find a compromise and finalize rapidly the reform of the Common European Asylum System.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that Bulgaria highly appreciate the humane role of UNHCR in bringing together all UNMS for one mission - to help and demonstrate solidarity. Bulgaria will continue its support to the programmes and activities of the High Commissioner in accordance with its national capacity.

I thank you, Madam Chair.