

**Draft Statement by Mr. Rachid Bladehane**  
**Secretary General – Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Algeria**

**Mr. Chair,**

**Mr. High Commissioner,**

**Honorable Ministers,**

**Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Allow me at the outset to commend you Mr. Chair and the members of the Bureau for your dedication and leadership in guiding the work of the UNHCR during the past year.

I wish also to thank the Secretariat for the quality of the documents presented to our session and the staff for their tireless efforts to ensure the assistance, protection and the search for durable solutions for persons of concern to UNHCR, often in harsh conditions.

Algeria aligns itself with the Statement delivered by Zimbabwe on behalf of the African Group, and would like to make remarks on five points:

**First, on the global forced displacement landscape**, well portrayed by the High Commissioner is a source of all concerns.

Despite the tremendous attention the International community has been and is still giving to this upsetting fact, the number of people on the move continue, over the years and decades, its raising trend.

We are saddened to be, day in, day out, the witnesses of cohorts of forcibly displaced persons trying to cross the deserts and the seas to seek safety. We are also saddened to realize that the number of persons under UNHCR's mandate has doubled during the last 20 years, exceeding the symbolic threshold of 70 million persons. We are further saddened to see 85% of them hosted in developing and least developed countries.

Should we give up? Absolutely NO! This is not at all an option. We are of the view that this injustice, and you would concur with me, has to come to an end, and without any further delay.

Since its inception, successes in the humanitarian endeavor have always been rooted in a spirit of concrete commitment to international cooperation and solidarity. These fundamental principles are today monumental in value and relevance, and represent a solid ground to any response the international community aspires to be fair, appropriate and sustainable.

**Second, how to respond in a sustainable way to the refugee issue?**

The “assistance” and “protection” dimensions of the UNHCR's mandate goes hand-in-hand with the search for and implementation of “appropriate durable solutions”. Indeed, the mandate of the UNHCR is ONE and UNDIVIDABLE. In this regard, while a limited number of refugees benefitted from such solutions, the majority is standing in the queue ... and in fact seeking justice. We have a particular thought for those waiting to exercise their fundamental right to return in safety and dignity.

While recalling the humanitarian character of the mandate of UNHCR, it is worth stressing that several refugee crises have been and continue to suffer a lack of progress in promoting political solutions or competing and politically motivated initiatives.

This component requires from all of us a deep commitment and a concrete action, in full respect of international law and the principles of the charter of the United Nations. It has to give due attention to prevention and the resolution of the root causes of forced displacement so as to break the vicious circle of conflicts - displacement - vulnerabilities. This is the only sustainable way to ease the burden borne by the so called “host countries”, that are *de facto*, but undervalued and less visible, donors.

In this regard, shall we recall the urgent need for a concrete burden sharing mechanism that enable the whole international community to engage in a fair and predictable manner in the humanitarian response to refugees’ plight. We would agree that no one should have the groundless luxury of feeling not concerned.

### **Third, on the Global Compact for Refugees**

The aforementioned elements were the starting point of the process, in which Algeria has engaged very actively and constructively, that led to the adoption of the Global Compact for Refugees.

Should we recall how the former UNSG Ban Ki Moon described the so called “refugee crisis” in 2015 as “not a crisis of numbers; it is a crisis of solidarity”.

Almost one year after the adoption of the Global Compact, Algeria looks forward to the first Global Refugee Forum, next December, and has taken great interest so far to explore together with the UNHCR and other partners ways and means to showcase and strengthen, particularly two priority areas: education and solutions. The aim is to share our practices and improve them by learning from others’ experiences.

### **Fourth, on statelessness,**

Algeria has supported the “*I Belong*” campaign to end statelessness within a ten year period. Ten years before the launch of this commendable campaign, in 2005, Algeria has modified its Nationality Law. It has also left its reservations regarding Article 9 of the Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.

Thus, several actions contained in the 10-years campaign were already and *de facto* implemented by Algeria, which takes today the pride to emphasize the near absence of stateless persons on its soil.

As we are at the mid road of the campaign, we take the opportunity to stress that we are keen to continue working with concerned partners towards the realization of the objectives assigned and to put an end to this phenomenon by 2024.

## **Fifth, refugees in Algeria**

Throughout its history, Algeria has always been a welcoming land; its doors open to those women and men seeking freedom and dignity for their people and homeland. The same spirit and tradition continue to enliven our commitment today *vis-à-vis* refugees and asylum seeker in Algeria.

Since 44 years, my country is hosting one of the most protracted, but the most invisible, refugee situation worldwide: the Sahrawi refugees, near Tindouf. I have the opportunity, today, to commend the UNHCR, its sister agencies as well as executing partners for their unwavering dedication towards them.

Alongside, Algeria has constantly been the major contributor to this programme, and more recently, it committed itself further to provide Sahrawi refugees with supplementary services, such as the connection of the camps to the national electricity grid; the construction of new infrastructures and the improvement of the basic services and the access to education.

We commend the UNHCR for leading the inter-agency efforts that led to the elaboration of the inter-agency thorough report, which brought out the increase of the total population of Sahrawi Refugees to 173600. We would like to take this opportunity to welcome this dynamic and the decision by the WFP Executive Board related to the adoption of the Country Strategic Plan for Algeria (2019-2022) based on the new sound figures.

We trust the findings of this report and the ongoing assessment of vulnerabilities will serve as official basis for funding requirements amongst the donor community and for better delivery of service to this population.

Before I conclude my intervention, I wish to ensure you, Mr. High Commissioner, that you have in Algeria a long-standing and trusted partner; and it is my pleasure to seize this opportunity to extend an invitation to you to visit the Sahrawi refugee camps near Tindouf Algeria and to be an eyewitness of an example of resilience and perseverance of a refugee community leaving for more than four decades in difficult conditions.

**I thank you very much**