



European Union

UNHCR Executive Committee 74th Session

9-13 October 2023

Agenda item 3: General debate

Statement by the European Union and its Member States

Madam/Mr Chair,

I am speaking on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

This year marks the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which provided a basis for the 1951 Refugee Convention. The right to seek and enjoy asylum and the principle of non-refoulement remain at the heart of European law, policy and action.

We are deeply concerned about the number of conflicts, natural disasters and the increasing magnitude and complexity of humanitarian crises.

We reiterate our gratitude to governments and host communities who have taken in forcibly displaced persons. Since the start of Russia's unprovoked and unjustified aggression against Ukraine, the EU and its Member States have provided Temporary Protection to over 4 million people fleeing the war, giving them access to essential services, the labour market, suitable accommodation, social welfare assistance, medical care and education. On 28 September 2023, we extended the temporary protection scheme until March 2025 and we are continuing to provide robust support for humanitarian needs inside Ukraine, including assistance to millions of internally displaced persons.

I would like to underline that our support for Ukraine has not diverted our attention and support from other displacement crises around the world. In 2023, the total EU humanitarian budget currently amounts to EUR 2.1 billion with the majority of funding allocated to Africa and the Middle East. Each year, about 80% of the EU humanitarian budget is allocated to projects

addressing the needs of forcibly displaced persons and host communities. For decades, we have been a leading donor to major forced displacement crises, bringing together humanitarian and development efforts in line with EU policy. Since 2020, at least EUR 3.45 billion have been disbursed by the EU to support refugees, IDPs and host communities and address the root causes of forced displacement.

The EU and its Member States continue to provide access to international protection for people fleeing war, conflict and persecution. In the first half of 2023, Member States received 513 000 applications and granted protection status to 181 615 asylum seekers. We continue to offer safe and legal pathways to international protection in the EU. Since 2015, EU-supported resettlement programmes have helped more than 115 000 refugees to find protection in the EU. We are working on our new pledges for 2024-2025. We encourage global efforts to increase complementary pathways to protection, and also dedicate our attention to social and economic inclusion of refugees. In this vein, we welcome the Multi-Year Workplan of Executive Committee Conclusions for 2024-2026 and we look forward to the development by UNHCR of a five-year strategy on asylum capacity development.

We are convinced that the upcoming second Global Refugee Forum is an important stepping stone for all actors to mobilise renewed and enhanced commitment and cooperation to jointly solve the plight of refugees. Given the challenges of forced displacement, mobilising resources and supporting host countries remains of paramount importance.

Considering the global challenges to respond and meet the needs of forcibly displaced persons, we appreciate that UNHCR has carried on with its internal reform efforts, especially the business transformation programme. We encourage UNHCR to strongly continue these efforts, in particular regarding oversight, and to provide regular updates on progress as well as challenges. We acknowledge UNHCR's work to broaden its donor base and encourage further efforts to this end, as to reduce the funding gap, for instance through prioritisation, enhanced synergies and especially joint-up approaches with other aid organisations.

We reiterate our resolute support to the UNHCR Statute and the independence of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in presenting its established and professional views to the membership, in order to support all people in vulnerable situations without discrimination on any ground.

Let me conclude by again expressing our deep appreciation for the important work and commitment of the staff of UNHCR and its partner organisations on the ground. The EU and its Member States will continue to support your work and mandate politically as well as financially, and you can count on our solid partnership.

Thank you.