



Seventy-fourth plenary session of the Executive Committee (ExCom)

Agenda Item 3 – General Debate

Statement by the Republic of Malta

9 – 13 October 2023

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High Commissioner
Excellencies,

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

We remain concerned about the number of situations across the globe that have led millions of persons to seek protection in countries other than their own. These situations continue to exacerbate the vulnerability of refugees and asylum seekers worldwide. The displacement of persons of concern to UNHCR from Ukraine due to Russia's ongoing, unprovoked, and unjustified war of aggression continues to cause major concern. Sudan and Syria and their impact on neighbouring states, who were already hosting many persons of concern to UNHCR, are also situations of major concern, including to countries and regions beyond their immediate neighbourhood. We are all too aware of the spill-over effect of such situations, also onto regions not in the immediate geographical neighbourhood. The role of UNHCR in addressing these unfolding crises remains as crucial as ever.

Our primary concern remains the Central Mediterranean route, which persists as a primary and perilous migratory route to Europe. Arrivals so far in 2023 indicate an intensification of migratory pressures beyond last year's levels. Thus, challenges to the receiving countries such as Malta remain. Notwithstanding these challenges, we reiterate our commitment at saving lives and to the effective management of mass migration, in a manner that fully respects international law including Refugee law. Our consistent position recognises the importance of establishing effective partnerships based on the principles of solidarity and shared responsibility which are crucial to manage refugee flows. Frontline countries, including Malta, requires support and durable solutions that safeguard the dignity, safety, and human rights of all for the benefit of both the persons of concern to UNHCR and the host country.

UNHCR continues to be an indispensable partner. And so, we highly appreciate UNHCR's continued assistance and cooperation, particularly through its offices in Malta.



**THE PERMANENT MISSION
OF MALTA TO THE UN GENEVA**

High Commissioner,

Malta supported the UN Global Compact on Refugees since its inception. We are pleased to report significant progress in the implementation of pledges we had made at the first Global Refugee Forum in 2019, including Malta's accession to the 1954 Statelessness Convention, refugee integration programs, support in labour market participation, and the consolidation of Malta's asylum agency into a fully-fledged International Protection Agency.

Looking ahead to the second Global Refugee Forum later this year, we will continue to consolidate our support to the Compact by submitting new pledges. These pledges will include areas such as sustainable return and reintegration; improved information dissemination; and improved services to better assist persons with disabilities, and LGBTIQ+ persons.

High Commissioner,

We support the non-discriminatory and human rights-based approach of UNHCR in its operations and its field missions, including the principles of age, gender, and diversity that inform its planning and programming. We thank UNHCR and its humanitarian personnel for continuing to provide vital and life-saving humanitarian assistance to millions of vulnerable people worldwide despite the huge daily risks they face. As a modest financial donor, we will continue to do our part in supporting UNHCR in this respect.

To conclude, let me say that, as an active and committed member of the international community, including as an elected UNSC member since January of this year, Malta continues to advocate the importance of upholding, respecting, and implementing the values and principles enshrined in International Law and regulations including International Humanitarian Law. We seek to give voice to those that need to be heard. We have not only a moral responsibility but also a duty to ensure that principled action backed by international norms and regulations is advocated and adhered to.

Thank you.