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Statement from Fast Retailing at the Global Refugee Forum 2023

Presented by Mr. Koji Yanai
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Good morning Mr. UN Secretary General, UNHCR High Commissioner, Co-Convenors, fellow speakers, distinguished guests.

My name is Koji Yanai. I am Group Senior Executive Officer at Fast Retailing, which operates over 3,500 stores globally, including those of UNIQLO, our most well-known brand.

It is my great honour to be here with you today. Let me take this opportunity to thank you for making the 2023 Global Refugee Forum possible.

We live in an age of incredible human connection – enabled through personal devices and access to a powerful global communication network. In this sense, the world is clearly united.

And yet, the number of forcibly displaced people has accelerated over the past 20 years to exceed 114 million. This represents one of the most serious global crises of our time. How did we get here? What can we do?

There is a triumvirate for change – governments, non-profit organizations, and the private sector. To overcome this global challenge, we must unite for transformational responses.

Firstly, we must do everything possible to avoid war and violent conflicts. This would reduce the number of people forced to flee.

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In addition, I hope governments everywhere commit to accepting as many refugees as possible. Constructive participation in society is human nature, and given the opportunity, there is huge unrealized potential for refugees to contribute economically, socially and culturally.

Since 2006, Fast Retailing has worked with UNHCR to support the wellbeing of refugees around the world. Today, this support is a pillar of our sustainability strategy. We believe in initiatives that realize the potential of refugees, and which promote self-reliance, dignity, and hope.

To date, we have contributed approximately US\$38 million into UNHCR programs to impact the lives of forcibly displaced people everywhere. I am pleased to announce today that Fast Retailing pledges to renew this commitment until August 2027.

As a proud UNHCR partner, we will continue working together on holistic support, with various programs for refugees and host communities.

We will provide clothing alongside UNHCR. We see first-hand the dignity and joy clothing brings to people who need it. Over the next four years, we are ready to donate up to 10 million items annually, as needed.

Self-reliance will be a key focus. We will build independence through our unique skills-development program in Bangladesh, and by supporting the UNHCR MADE51 program to generate income for refugees. We will keep employing refugees through our business and will increase the number of people we hire each year.

We will extend the reach and impact of our advocacy and fundraising initiatives alongside UNHCR and will contribute financially when emergencies hit.

Through these efforts, we are committed to helping refugees become self-reliant. And our renewed partnership means we can contribute to the multistakeholder pledge on self-reliance, economic inclusion, and social protection.

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But we are one company.

The entire private sector has a critical role to play. Until now the resources of business have been under-utilized. I invite our private-sector colleagues here today to unite and make a difference. Your support is needed now more than ever. Fast Retailing would welcome the opportunity to share our experience with you, and to also learn from you.

From now until 2027, we are looking forward to achieving greater results for refugees than ever before.

Thank you.