

UNHCR GLOBAL REFUGEE FORUM

STATEMENT BY H.E. THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF EQUALITY AND MIGRATION OF PORTUGAL

GENEVA, 14 DECEMBER 2023

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High Commissioner Filippo Grandi,
Excellencies,
Colleagues,

Earlier this week, I participated in the high-level event to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The Declaration recognized the right to seek and enjoy asylum, and therefore opened the way to the 1951 Convention and to its 1967 Protocol.

These documents are not relics of the past. They are more needed than ever and we must find new ways to implement and advance their dispositions.

In a pivotal moment for multilateralism and UNHCR, the UN General Assembly in 2018 agreed on the Global Compact on Refugees.

We gather again to renew our commitments. It is time to act. And act we must – because the number of refugees and forcibly displaced people is at an all-time high. 1 in every 74 people on Earth had already been forced to flee. And this was before the current tragedy unfolding in Gaza.

We support the appeal of the SG for a full humanitarian ceasefire. We hope the political signal given by the UN General Assembly yesterday will be followed by concrete actions to stop this terrible bloodshed, so that **ALL** parties abide by International Humanitarian Law.

Humanitarian crises are becoming more complex and longer, due to armed conflicts and the devastating consequences of climate change.

While we support the work of UNHCR we must undertake a paradigm shift in our public policies.

In Portugal, we adopted such a shift. We created the Agency for Integration, Migration and Asylum, for a more humanist policy in which asylum applications and community integration are joined up.

In this spirit, we present the following eight pledges:

- To increase our resettlement quota.
- To strengthen the mechanisms for civil society participation.
- To create new centres dedicated to integrating refugees in the labour market.
- To reform our national programme for learning Portuguese, adapting it to the needs of refugees and migrants.
- To streamline family reunification procedures.
- To implement inclusion projects through sport.
- To reinforce our financial contribution to the UNHCR.
- To make a financial contribution to the Global Platform for Higher Education in Emergencies.

We are also glad to be leading, with Brazil, the multistakeholder pledge on family reunification.

At a national level, Portugal will continue to support around 60.000 people that fled the war in Ukraine and sought temporary protection in our country as well as around 1.200 Afghans we welcomed since 2021.

At an international level, Portugal will continue to support UNHCR on issues such as economic inclusion, higher education as a complementary pathway, mental health and psychosocial support, and the eradication of statelessness.

Thank you very much.