



Permanent Mission of the Republic of Cyprus  
Geneva

**Speaker:** H.E. Ambassador Olympia Neocleous,

### **STATEMENT BY CYPRUS MISSION**

To the  
Seventy-Fifth Plenary Session of the Executive Committee (ExCom)  
of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees  
Geneva, October 2024

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Chair, High Commissioner,

Cyprus aligns itself with the EU statement.

We recognize the extraordinary work of UNHCR and its partners, who tirelessly support over 117 million refugees and displaced individuals globally.

As the global landscape of displacement evolves due to the convergence of multiple crises—such as emerging and protracted conflicts, escalating climate change impacts, and persistent human rights violations—the humanitarian challenges become more immense by the day. Urgent and sustained action is needed to provide protection, assistance, and durable solutions for those forced to flee their homes.

Projections paint a sombre picture: the number of forcibly displaced and stateless persons may very well continue to surge in the coming years. This impending rise poses a formidable challenge to the international

community, one that will test our collective resolve, resources, and humanitarian capacity like never before.

Cyprus remains committed to upholding international human rights law and condemns any attempts to instrumentalize migrants and refugees for political motives. Facilitating and orchestrating their movement across borders not only violates their rights but poses significant challenges to state security and humanitarian efforts. We call for compliance with international obligations to protect civilians and facilitate humanitarian access.

As a member of the EU, Cyprus supports the whole-of-route, rights-based approach promoted by UNHCR. We appreciate the focus on mixed movements and the importance of partnerships with organizations like the International Organization for Migration. Our commitment to the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum reflects our dedication to these principles.

In the face of today's enormous challenges - including the unfolding situation in the Middle East, the dangerous escalation in Lebanon and its impact on civilians and refugees - Cyprus has stepped up in its humanitarian response, including through facilitating evacuations by accommodating those seeking safety.

Since the onset of Russia's war of aggression on Ukraine, we have welcomed over 20,000 Ukrainians. Moreover, over the last 10 years the Republic of Cyprus has granted international protection to almost 19,000 third-country nationals, mainly Syrians.

For quite a few years now, Cyprus has consistently been the EU Member State with the highest per capita number of first-time applications for international protection, corresponding to 6% of the country's population. This sustained pressure has placed significant strain on our national resources and infrastructure.

To address the challenges we have established a Deputy Ministry for Migration and International Protection and we are constantly enhancing our infrastructure to better support asylum seekers. Our national refugee policy focuses on promoting integration, access to education, healthcare, and vocational training for displaced persons.

Cyprus reaffirms its commitment to the Global Compact on Refugees. We recognize the need for sustainable solutions that empower displaced

persons and support host communities, working closely with development actors and local organizations.

Cyprus commends UNHCR's unwavering commitment to fostering an inclusive and equitable response, not only for those under its protection but also within its own ranks. We deeply value the efforts made through the UNHCR's strategic framework on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), which ensures that all individuals, regardless of background or identity, receive the support and respect they deserve. This approach strengthens the effectiveness of humanitarian efforts by embracing the rich diversity of both beneficiaries and staff.

In the complex landscape of refugee protection, UNHCR stands as my country's indispensable partner. I would like to reaffirm my government's steadfast commitment to this partnership. Working together with UNHCR has been pivotal in navigating the challenges we face, and we are eager to continue building upon these foundations.

In conclusion, Cyprus stands firmly in solidarity with the UNHCR and the international community. We are dedicated to protecting the rights of refugees and asylum seekers, ensuring their access to safety, and contributing to a collective response that prioritizes humanity and dignity.

Thank you.