

Thank you, Chair, High Commissioner,

Let me start by paying tribute to those humanitarian workers who have so tragically lost their lives in the past year – not least among them the UNHCR colleagues whom we have lost in the course of their duties in Lebanon, they have paid the ultimate price in their labour for peace and humanitarianism.

We are deeply concerned about the escalating humanitarian situation in the Middle East and in Lebanon. The UK emphasises all parties' obligation to comply with international humanitarian law and to ensure protection for civilians and civilian infrastructure. My Government has been clear, the fighting must stop, the hostages must be freed, and there must be safe and free humanitarian access to those in need.

Turning to the themes of the Executive Committee, as we face future uncertainties and ever-increasing global displacement, we need to continue to work in solidarity and in unity to find solutions. Forcibly displaced persons demand and expect that the international community takes responsibility.

My Government's commitment to multilateralism and multilateral solutions is clear and deep-rooted. The UK will work hand-in-hand with UNHCR to respond to the growing list of protracted and emerging crises. We will tackle climate and nature emergencies and global development challenges together, by working for peace and promoting global economic development and growth to develop sustainable solutions. And we welcome the High Commissioner's recent visit to London and the contact he has had with UK Ministers.

But clearly, the situation in countries of origin needs international attention too. We need to address root causes and invest in early anticipatory action that builds resilience and independence. We need partnerships that promote local leadership. And we need to empower women and girls.

Where needs arise, UNHCR must continue to provide protection for the most vulnerable. But clearly – more predictable and more sustainable support is needed so that increasingly stretched resources can be used more efficiently to keep pace with rising needs. UNHCR's ongoing commitment to reform, efficiencies and effectiveness is an important part of this.

The UK is committed to seeking sustainable solutions together. Not just because inclusion in national systems is the right thing to do, but also because it is the smart thing to do. And we support national ownership and the leadership of hosting countries – who I want to recognize here for their generosity - where this is in refugees' best interests.

This is why, at last year's Global Refugee Forum, the UK highlighted the need to look beyond traditional humanitarian partnerships to galvanize joint sustainable action. And we have been working hard with our partners over the last ten months to put those commitments into action.

We must be led by the needs of displaced people wherever and whenever we find them. But I want to point to two specific crises which demand our attention. Firstly, Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine in flagrant breach of the UN Charter. This year, the UK provided £100 million in humanitarian assistance and like my Czech colleague I want to pay tribute to the British people who have extended sanctuary to almost 300,000 Ukrainians since the start of the invasion.

And Sudan which is perhaps the world's most severe humanitarian crisis with almost 25 million people in need of assistance. Thank you, High Commissioner, for speaking out so clearly about the scale and horror of the conflict. We have provided almost 100m in assistance for Sudan this year.

And finally, on statelessness, we are grateful to UNHCR for its leadership of the I Belong campaign. The achievements are a strong foundation on which to launch the Global Alliance, which the UK is honored to join. We know statelessness can be ended, and we look forward to working with others on this shared mission.

I'll end by reiterate the UK's gratitude to all UNHCR staff who tirelessly provide assistance to those who need it, so often in such difficult and dangerous circumstances. Let us, through the Executive Committee, show them our sustained support.

Thank you.