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Statement by

H.E. Ambassador Désirée SCHWEITZER

*Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations
and other International Organisations in Geneva*

G e n e r a l D e b a t e

Thank you, Madam Chair.

At the outset, let me thank all UNHCR staff in the field and at headquarters for their dedication and hard work in difficult and dangerous operating environments. I equally want to thank High Commissioner Filippo Grandi and Deputy High Commissioner Kelly Clements for their outstanding leadership.

Austria aligns itself with the statements by the European Union and by the Group of Friends of the #IBelong Campaign to End Statelessness.

We are gravely concerned about the **continuously sharply rising numbers of forcibly displaced persons**, which have reached over 120 million by now: This corresponds to one in 70 persons worldwide.

We manifestly deplore and condemn the ongoing persecution, severe human rights violations, political oppression, conflicts and wars in too many countries forcing millions to flee their homes and already displaced persons to further displacement.

We call upon all parties to armed conflict globally to strictly abide by their obligation to respect and ensure respect for **international humanitarian law** in all circumstances. This includes the obligation to grant full, safe and unhindered humanitarian access and guarantee the safety of humanitarian corridors and workers.

Madam Chair,

In the midst of the manifold increasingly catastrophic situations, we are deeply grateful for UNHCR's indispensable **humanitarian work** in delivering life-saving protection and assistance. Austria is proud to be among UNHCR's top donors. For many years, the Office has been one of our largest partners in the implementation of our humanitarian assistance.

We highly appreciate UNHCR's focus on the protection of **women and girls**, including women and girls impacted by sexual and gender-based violence, and through the provision of access to sexual and reproductive health and rights. It is commendable that age, gender and diversity will remain a priority in the Office's programming.

We cherish UNHCR's efforts to expand opportunities for the inclusion of refugee, asylum-seeker and returnee children in national **education** systems, as well as to provide support to education programmes in emergency settings.

Austria values that UNHCR's operations further aim at strengthening access to **health care**, responding to epidemics and supporting national health systems. We equally commend the Office for its activities to address the specific protection and assistance needs of **persons with disabilities**, including the structured dialogues to increase qualitative protection analysis.

Austria will continue to support the Office's precious work in line with our **Strategy on Humanitarian Assistance** adopted last year. As the Strategy sets out, Austria, in responding to humanitarian crises, commits to enhance its focus on vulnerable groups, including LGBTIQ+ persons.

Madam Chair,

Austria welcomes the initiative of UNHCR in cooperation with IOM on the development of a cross-regional **route-based approach**. Recent developments and interdependencies in a globalised world underline the need for comprehensive approaches to adequately address mixed migratory movements, taking the specific characteristics of routes with their individual challenges into account and developing tailor-made measures for them.

It is crucial to strengthen **protection on the ground** by supporting particularly affected host countries in the regions of origin and thereby foster global burden- and responsibility sharing in the spirit of the Global Compact on Refugees.

Austria continues to face challenges with the number of **asylum applications** filed in our country: In 2024, already more than 16,900 asylum applications have been registered. In the period from 2015 to the first half of 2024, the second highest number per capita in the EU has been registered in Austria.

Austria is also one of the **key refugee-hosting countries in Europe**: In 2024, asylum has been granted to more than 12,650 persons, subsidiary protection to more than 5,400 persons and humanitarian stay to nearly 1,000 persons. In addition, more than 118,300 displaced persons from Ukraine have registered in Austria since the beginning of the war.

With regard to the **Russian war of aggression against Ukraine**, Austria has been the first EU Member State to organise transfers of Ukrainian nationals from the Republic of Moldova within the framework of the EU Solidarity Platform.

In this context, with transfers of 580 displaced persons, Austria has admitted the second highest number within the EU. We would like to take this opportunity to thank UNHCR as a key partner for the comprehensive efforts in the organisation and implementation of transfers.

Madam Chair,

Being a party to both UN statelessness conventions and a member of the Group of Friends of the #IBelong campaign, Austria welcomes this year's high-level segment on **statelessness**. We appreciate the adoption of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights Relating to the Specific Aspects of the Right to a Nationality and the Eradication of Statelessness in Africa early this year.

Furthermore, we commend the Congo and São Tomé and Príncipe for their accession to both UN statelessness conventions.

We welcome the consensual adoption of this year's **Executive Committee Conclusions** on Durable Solutions and Complementary Pathways under the Rapporteur's skilful guidance.

Let me conclude by reiterating the full support of Austria to the High Commissioner and the dedicated staff of UNHCR in being the lifeline and voice of refugees and forcibly displaced persons wherever they are.

Thank you very much.