

76th Annual Plenary Session of the Executive Committee of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson

On behalf of the delegation of Jamaica, I extend appreciation to High Commissioner Grandi for his opening statement delivered on Monday, 06 October, and wish to acknowledge his hard work, dedication and sterling leadership during the period of his tenure in facilitating the rendering of vital protection services to refugees amidst the challenging times in the multilateral system. We also commend the relentless efforts of the team at the UNHCR.

This year's meeting comes at a critical time when funding constraints have impacted on the operations of the Agency, resulting in staff and budgetary cuts, including in zones of high operation, and the closure of field offices. We, however, commend the agility, creativity and forward thinking of the Agency through the streamlining of its operations and maximizing partnerships with international financial institutions, bilateral donors and the private sector to strengthen its core capacity.

The world is witnessing unprecedented levels of forced displacement, occasioned by climate change, conflicts and deep-rooted socio-economic challenges, to name only a few, which often exacerbate social and economic tensions in host communities, due to increased pressure on limited resources, facilities and services. We, therefore, express gratitude to the UNHCR and its administration for the continued humanitarian support to the Caribbean Region. We are confident that this support will continue to be prioritized amidst structural adjustments.

For over fifteen (15) years, Jamaica's Refugee Policy, along with our adherence to international standards in the refugee determination process, has served as a standard to guarantee fair treatment and protection of persons applying for refugee status. We also support the Global Compact on Refugees and advocate for coordinated and rapid responses to address the root causes of displacement, evidenced by Jamaica's contribution to the former Multinational Security Support Mission in Haiti.

We also wish to highlight the importance of the UNHCR's focus on peace, development planning and financing, which seeks to strengthen the link between humanitarian response priorities and the long-term needs of irregular migrants and those seeking and have been granted asylum. This is important in addressing the concerns stoking instability in our region, particularly in our sister nation, Haiti. We, therefore, welcome the adoption by the United Nations Security Council of the resolution authorizing the

establishment of a “Gang Suppression Force”, along with the expected UN Support Office in Haiti. This significant development will contribute to efforts to more cohesively address the conditions that give rise to irregular migration, focusing not only on security and institutions of the State, but also on capacity building, economic development and social factors.

In this connection, my delegation commends the Agency for its efforts in devising development-oriented and people-centered solutions. Additionally, we encourage the UNHCR to sponsor programs of capacity building for countries experiencing challenges in complying with their security obligations under treaty obligations, including those related to free movement arrangements in regional blocs, such as CARICOM.

Chair, solutions can no longer involve only meeting the basic needs of irregular migrants, those seeking refugee status and asylum seekers but should address vulnerabilities in the humanitarian response and support self-reliance and sustainable solutions. In line with the humanitarian reset initiative, we also endorse the focus on localisation, which ensures that interventions are culture and community sensitive, sustainable and involve local and national actors. This does not only afford for ownership but for more lasting and impactful interventions.

At the regional and international levels, Jamaica has been supportive of actions aimed at supporting peace-building and reconstruction efforts in countries of origin. Chair, we, therefore, lament the budget cuts for key services, such as education, health, shelter and gender-based violence response. As Jimmy Cliff, the legendary Jamaican musician, in his song titled “Refugees” says, “Refugees, needing a helping hand, could it be someone like you and me.” We, therefore, endorse the High Commissioner’s call for unearmarked voluntary contributions for the maintenance of humanitarian intervention in these areas, and in the spirit of shared and collective responsibility, encourage Member States, who are able to, to provide the requisite support.

As the United Nations celebrates its 80th anniversary, we welcome the UN80 initiative aimed at reforming the system, making it more effective and efficient. In this connection, we take note of the UNHCR’s participation in the humanitarian cluster, with a focus on efficiency. We welcome ongoing collaborative work between the Agency and other entities such as the UNDP and IOM, to address situations requiring a mixed solution, as well as the use of tools, such as the IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) for crucial data across the humanitarian sector. Applying the principle of “two hands clap better than one” is crucial in ensuring the efficient and effective delivery of humanitarian services.

In concluding, Jamaica reaffirms its commitment to affording fair treatment and safeguarding the human rights of refugees and other people on the move, as well as

to supporting the work of the UNHCR in the delivery of protection services for refugees and, in particular, in its role as a Solutions Champion.