



Permanent Mission of the Republic of Cyprus

Geneva

Speaker: H.E. Ambassador Olympia Neocleous,

STATEMENT BY CYPRUS MISSION

To the

Seventy-Sixth Plenary Session of the Executive Committee (ExCom)

of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Geneva, October 2025

Chair, High Commissioner,

Cyprus aligns with the statement delivered by Denmark on behalf of likeminded European States.

High Commissioner, you urged us to defend asylum while delivering practical results, to support hosting countries, and to face the funding crisis with realism. We heed your call. We value UNHCR's catalytic,

operational, and diplomatic roles, and we will invest in inclusion and self-reliance.

Cyprus speaks as a small island state at the European Union's external borders carrying responsibilities disproportionate for its size. For years, we have recorded the highest per-capita rate of first-time asylum applications in the EU, placing sustained pressure on our limited capacity and infrastructure. Since the onset of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, we have welcomed tens of thousands of Ukrainians under temporary protection, and over the past decade we have granted international protection to thousands of third country nationals, mainly Syrians.

To manage these realities, we established a Deputy Ministry for Migration and International Protection. We have prioritised reception, strengthened safeguards for unaccompanied minors, and focused on sustainable responses—education, healthcare, and vocational training – within the context of our National Integration Strategy.

Allow me to underscore a milestone: the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum. Under the Pact, Cyprus is advancing fair and efficient procedures so that decisions are faster, of higher quality, and grounded in safeguards for those in need. We are enhancing procedures concerning registration and screening; deepening responsibility-sharing and solidarity; ensuring dignified, rights-respecting returns for those who are not entitled to remain in the country pursuing whole-of-route cooperation with partners; and expanding safe and legal pathways. This is our contribution to the integrity of the international protection system.

On the humanitarian front in Gaza, Cyprus is focused on tangible results. Through the Cyprus Maritime Corridor, our 'Amalthea Plan' has established a sustainable, transparent and verifiable route to bring aid swiftly, predictably and safely to civilians in cooperation with our European and Gulf partners, especially the UAE, under the UN humanitarian framework. Our contribution seeks to connect, to facilitate, and to deliver where it is most needed. In doing so, Cyprus plays its part, guided by the urgency of alleviating human suffering.

Whilst our efforts intensify, we condemn, in the strongest terms, the instrumentalisation of migrants and asylum seekers for political ends. Such practices endanger lives, undermine regional stability, and corrode public trust. Dismantling criminal smuggling networks should be a priority in order to hinder the commission of unlawful acts and safeguard human rights.

We share your concern about the funding crisis and restrictions on resources facing UNHCR and implementing partners. In view of dire humanitarian crises globally—in Gaza, Afghanistan, Syria, Sudan, the DRC, and Haiti among many others—protecting core protection and operational capacity must remain the priority.

Looking to the Global Refugee Forum Progress Review in December 2025, we encourage all stakeholders to deepen responsibility-sharing and safeguard the integrity of the asylum regime. Cyprus will continue to do its part—upholding international law, implementing reforms that strengthen protection, and partnering with UNHCR to deliver solutions.

Thank you.