

**U.S. Statement
at the 76th Session of the UNHCR Executive Committee
Agenda Item Four – International Protection**

October 9, 2025

High Commissioner,

Chair,

The asylum systems in many countries are facing growing pressures, shaped by genuine humanitarian needs but equally if not more so by rampant abuse of these systems by economic migrants avoiding the requirements of immigration law. The result is to strain receiving-country resources that rightfully belong to citizens and, ultimately, to undermine public confidence in the asylum principle itself. While many policymakers acknowledge these issues, recognition alone is not enough. Meaningful action and considered, focused reforms are essential.

When the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol were drafted, the global context was very different. The legacy of World War II, limited mobility, and the geopolitical realities of the Cold War shaped their design. Today, the world is more interconnected, migration patterns are more complex, and the scale of displacement is unprecedented. Addressing these realities requires a modernized approach.

Reforms of the international protection framework must be grounded in a renewed commitment to core principles: respect for national sovereignty, the integrity of national borders, recognition of asylum's temporary nature, an end to so-called "asylum shopping," recognition of the legitimacy of safe third-country options, and the responsibility of states to accept the return of their nationals in a timely manner. By reasserting the centrality of these values, we can build a fairer and more sustainable system that upholds protection from persecution for those who truly need it while ensuring the protection of our borders, our citizens, and our legal processes.

The United States is not alone in our concerns or in supporting these principles. We call on member states and UNHCR to support this critical endeavor to reform the international protection regime. UNHCR has a unique role to play in these efforts, one that can enhance its credibility and strengthen its alignment with the views and priorities of member states. By focusing on its core mandate and working collaboratively to address the challenges of displacement, UNHCR can help advance solutions that reflect the collective will of member states rather than pursue unilateral priorities.

Together, we can build a system that is responsive, fair, and sustainable, one that protects those in genuine need while respecting the sovereignty and values of all nations.