



PERMANENT REPRESENTATION OF ESTONIA
TO THE UN AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL
ORGANISATIONS IN GENEVA

**Statement by Her Excellency Ms Riia Salsa-Audiffren,
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Estonia to the
76th plenary session of the Executive Committee
2025**

Mr. Chair,

Estonia aligns itself with the statement delivered by Denmark on behalf of likeminded European states.

I want to begin by expressing Estonia's gratitude to UNHCR for their outstanding efforts and steadfast commitment during global crises, and to High Commissioner Filippo Grandi personally, whose visionary leadership and tireless service over the past decennium have left a powerful legacy. Amid unprecedented challenges, UNHCR relentlessly strives to provide humanity and dignity to those in greatest need—whether by safeguarding vulnerable communities, delivering essential aid, protecting the asylum system or supporting the restoration of lives in Ukraine, Gaza, Sudan and many other places.

Unfortunately, we can't go without reiterating this: Russia's ongoing brutal and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine represents a clear and systematic violation of the UN Charter, international law, including international humanitarian law and human rights. It remains the primary cause of forced displacement across our region, further aggregated by the attacks against civilian population and objects, including critical energy infrastructure. In 2025, civilian harm has escalated significantly, with total casualties during the first eight months rising by 40% compared to the same period in 2024. In addition, exactly one month ago Russia launched its biggest overnight air attack with 810 drones and 13 missiles. Today, nearly half of the country's population is in urgent need of humanitarian assistance as a direct consequence of an aggression caused by a permanent member of the UN Security Council.

However, Estonia is trying to do its part by helping and sharing the burden. We are hosting more than 40 000 Ukrainian refugees, that is approximately 3% of our population. Around 90% of them are well settled in the country and engaged in employment or education. UNHCR's support in Estonia and the wider region as part of the regional refugee response plan is much appreciated.

We also understand the importance of predictability on next year's budget, stressed by the High Commissioner. I am pleased to note, that Estonia has already made its regular contributions for 2026.

Mr. Chair,

We are not only facing an increasing number of humanitarian crises around the world, but this is amplified by questioning the global asylum system and severe reduction of available funding that the humanitarian sector is facing as we speak. We appreciate the difficult decisions that UNHCR has already implemented.

We all have to contribute to make the humanitarian and refugee systems fit for purpose given the resources available. Implementation of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum is a great example of a systematic change that, when implemented, provides more transparent, coherent, and faster support for individuals in need of international protection. UNHCR has had an important role in the legislative reform in the EU. Thank you for your contribution.

We have no doubts that UNHCR will play an active and constructive part in the ongoing Humanitarian Reset, as well as in the UN80 initiative. It's important that we make the right choices by focusing on UNHCR's most important work and make the best use of our limited resources. This is also where the work on durable solutions, IDPs and digital innovation is crucial as it helps reduce future burden on the humanitarian cluster.

Similarly to people you work for, UNHCR as organisation is in the midst of unparalleled changes. We remain confident and stand with UNHCR to make sure this transition reinforces organisation's mandate and the global refugee protection framework, whilst making UNHCR more resilient to the rapidly changing world.

Thank you.