

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Executive Committee

Seventy-Sixth Session – Australia's National Statement

High Commissioner, Chair, your excellencies, distinguished delegates. Australia would like to align itself with the upcoming MIKTA statement to be delivered by the Republic of Korea.

Australia acknowledges the tireless efforts of UNHCR staff, and the risks they face working in dangerous environments.

2024 was the deadliest year on record for humanitarian workers, and, tragically, this trend has continued in 2025. Since the start of 2024, over 670 humanitarian personnel have been killed.

Respect for international humanitarian law is being severely undermined with consequences for current and future conflicts.

On 21 September, after a year-long diplomatic effort to drive global action to protect humanitarian workers in conflict zones, Australia and the Ministerial Group of Brazil, Colombia, Indonesia, Japan, Jordan, Sierra Leone, Switzerland and the United Kingdom launched the Declaration for the Protection of Humanitarian Personnel.

The endorsement of the Declaration by more than 100 countries – more than half the membership of the United Nations – reflects a growing consensus that the protection of humanitarian personnel must be elevated on the international agenda. We look forward to working with member states through the Group of Friends for the Protection of Humanitarian Personnel to achieve tangible progress on this important issue.

We appreciate the incredible pressure the humanitarian system is under, and acknowledge the substantial needs that will go unmet in 2025. Australia's support for UNHCR and the multilateral system remains steadfast. We are proud to provide predictable, multi-year, flexible funding to support the essential work UNHCR undertakes in Asia and the Pacific.

In addition to our reliable core funding, we continue to work with UNHCR and other key stakeholders to deliver our Global Refugee Forum pledges, including to support refugee responses in our region.

Since the GRF, Australia has increased its commitment of humanitarian assistance to support Rohingya refugees and host communities in Bangladesh, and communities in need in Myanmar, from AUD235 million to AUD629 million. This includes a new three-year program of AUD370 million starting in 2026.

We acknowledge UNHCR's critical work in supporting the interim Government of Bangladesh to provide essential services and meet the protection needs of Rohingya refugees, and its work across Myanmar to protect, assist, and find lasting solutions for displaced and stateless people.

UNHCR has played a critical role in delivering upon Australia's commitment to responsibility sharing, and our region.

High Commissioner, as you preside over your last Executive Committee, Australia wishes to thank you for your leadership and dedication in galvanising international solidarity to address global displacement and foster durable solutions for refugees.

We trust your successor will continue the important work you have spearheaded, including to develop the Global Compact on Refugees and ensure its commitments are delivered upon through the Global Refugee Forum. We want your tireless work on whole-of-route approaches and partnerships, with the World Bank for example, to continue.

Australia remains a proud partner of UNHCR as we all work to reform the humanitarian system and safeguard protection for all those who need it.

Australia supports ambitious and **bold reform** to enable the humanitarian system to be streamlined, coordinated, effective and fit for the future. We stand ready to engage as a key consultative partner for the UN system as changes are considered.

We will also continue to collaborate with UNHCR to advance the refugee participation agenda, to ensure refugee voices inform our policy and programs in a systematic and impactful way.

I am honoured now to introduce Dr Renee Dixon, a valued member of the Australian Refugee Advisory Panel.

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Excellencies, colleagues,

We meet at a time when international humanitarian law is under severe strain. Across crises, displacement is rising alongside increasing challenges to universal protections, including for minorities and vulnerable groups. These efforts destabilise multilateral systems, silence civil society, and push people into systemic marginalisation.

Australia's Humanitarian Policy recognises that women, children, people with disabilities, and LGBTQIA+ people are disproportionately affected in crises. Evidence shows that forcibly displaced LGBTQIA+ people may experience barriers to protection, recognition, and services across all stages of displacement and settlement. Barriers to accessing shelters, justice, health, education, employment, and housing, as well as humanitarian assistance and access to aid remain. LGBTQIA+ forcibly displaced people remain at high risks of violence and discrimination. Funding for refugee-led organisations remains largely inaccessible and insufficient to address these gaps.

My service on advisory boards to the Australian Government and UNHCR gives me hope. In 2024, 56 per cent of UNHCR country operations had implemented programmes and activities incorporating the needs of LGBTQIA+ persons. Australia recognises the

vulnerabilities of LGBTQIA+ forcibly displaced people in its resettlement programs. When refugees and stateless people work together with policy makers, we create effective and evidence-based strategies and solutions.

The Meaningful Refugee Participation pledge has opened these spaces, and advisory boards have proven indispensable. Inclusive representation of those most affected by displacement brings expertise grounded in lived experience and strengthens solutions, empowers communities, and fosters belonging. It also helps dismantle stereotypes, reduce stigma, and promote mutual respect and social cohesion.

We call on UNHCR and all Member States to embed meaningful refugee participation across all decisions, policies and programming recognising the intersecting and compounding disadvantages for those at greater risk. Resourcing refugee-led organisations and sharing decision-making power are essential to making participation real and lasting.