

United Nations Refugee Agency
76th Executive Committee
Delivered by Permanent Representative Deborah Geels
7 October 2025

Thank you, Chair.

New Zealand is grateful to High Commissioner Grandi and UNHCR for their tireless efforts to provide crucial humanitarian assistance, protection, and durable solutions for displaced persons worldwide - essential work that UNHCR is uniquely placed to do. New Zealand remains committed to our partnership with UNHCR and collaboration with the global community to uphold the rights and well-being of refugees and displaced populations.

UNHCR and the wider humanitarian sector continue to face unprecedented challenges, with crises growing in scale and complexity and needs far exceeding available resources. One in every 67 people is now forcibly displaced - nearly double the rate a decade ago - with children making up 40% of those displaced. Overlapping crises, from climate to food insecurity, are compounding needs and straining response capacity with long-term consequences.

We are gravely concerned by the surge in forced displacement due to armed conflict. New Zealand continues to condemn, unequivocally, Russia's illegal and unprovoked attack on Ukraine which has caused immense suffering and significant displacement within Ukraine and to neighbouring countries. The conflict in the Middle East continues to have a catastrophic impact on civilians in Gaza with implications for the wider region. New Zealand is also deeply concerned by the humanitarian situation in Sudan, now the world's largest displacement crisis, with over 14 million Sudanese people displaced.

New Zealand recognises the vital role of UNHCR in the Asia Pacific. In Myanmar, over 3.5 million people are internally displaced, and more than 1.5 million have fled to neighbouring countries. In Afghanistan, decades of instability - now compounded by the recent devastating earthquake - have left millions displaced. UNHCR's operational leadership is essential in delivering life-saving assistance, supporting host communities, and advancing durable solutions.

New Zealand is deeply concerned by rising attacks on humanitarian personnel and increasing instances of disregard for international humanitarian law. We reaffirm our strong support for efforts to protect humanitarian personnel and commend Australia's leadership in advancing renewed international commitment through its Declaration for the Protection of Humanitarian Personnel. We call on all parties to respect IHL.

New Zealand notes with concern the scale of underfunding faced by UNHCR this year. This underlines the need for flexible and predictable funding. New Zealand has consistently provided multi-year and unearmarked funding to UNHCR to ensure life-saving aid can continue to reach the most vulnerable. Over the past year, we have also made further contributions to UNHCR's humanitarian protection and assistance programs for Sudanese and Ukrainian refugees and returnees, as well as supporting host communities.

New Zealand acknowledges that UNHCR has undertaken its organisational review under extremely challenging circumstances. We welcome the focus on prioritisation of its core work, and its efforts to reinforce accountability during this period of transition. We also recognise UNHCR's contribution to the Humanitarian Reset and UN80 Initiative, and encourage continued engagement with local actors, including women-led organisations and a strong emphasis on gender and disability inclusion.

New Zealand remains committed to collaborate with UNHCR, host countries and the broader international community in the resettlement of refugees. Our long-standing Refugee Quota Programme and complementary pathways, and our efforts to help refugees settle successfully, demonstrate that commitment. Earlier this year, New Zealand renewed its commitment to resettle 1,500 refugees annually through to 2029 and provide increased flexibility to respond to UNHCR priorities. Under the Community Organisation Refugee Sponsorship pilot, 201 refugees have been approved to come to New Zealand, supported by 25 community sponsor groups.

New Zealand reaffirms our commitment to fully implementing our Global Refugee Forum pledges, including meaningful refugee participation, employment and self-sufficiency and inclusion in health systems. We are also working to strengthen protection and solutions capacity across the Asia Pacific, and to bolster the issuance and acceptance of refugee travel documents globally.

In closing, New Zealand commends you, High Commissioner, and the work of your staff throughout the world for your service to the world's refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced and other persons of concern. As this marks your final Executive Committee meeting following nearly ten years of distinguished leadership at UNHCR, we extend our deepest appreciation for your unwavering commitment and principled service.

Thank you.