

76th SESSION OF THE UNHCR EXCOM

Item 3: GENERAL DEBATE

Statement by MONTENEGRO

as delivered by H.E. Ambassador Slavica Milačić, Permanent Representative of Montenegro to the UN and other IOs in Geneva

Geneva, 8 October 2025

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

High Commissioner,

Let me begin by thanking you for your sobering and powerful statement on the unprecedented scale of forced displacement and the growing need for international protection.

We are witnessing an immense **human suffering** that demands our collective resolve. Escalating conflicts, multifaceted emergencies, and interlinked political, economic, and security crises continue to uproot millions across the globe.

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine - now entering its fourth year, the catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza, and the ongoing crises in Sudan, Myanmar, Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Yemen, Haiti, and Venezuela - to name only a few - have driven millions from their homes, often with no safe place to return to.

In the face of such complexity, **international cooperation and respect for international law** are not optional - they are essential.

We must **protect civilians and civilian infrastructure**.

We must **ensure accountability** for violations of international law.

And we must **guarantee access** to affected populations and the **unhindered delivery of humanitarian aid**.

Without these fundamentals, conflicts will only grow more **deadly, destabilizing, and dehumanizing**.

Mr. Chair,

The already dire situation is exacerbated by the **deepening funding crisis** across the humanitarian system.

UNHCR's sharp funding cut in 2025 has constrained the Organization's ability to deliver on its core mandate, pushing for difficult adjustments and a significant downscaling of its operations and presence worldwide - including in **Montenegro**.

This has placed additional pressure on refugees, asylum systems, and already overstretched host communities.

Against this backdrop, we **welcome UNHCR's commitment** to efficiency, innovation, and reform, and its engagement in the **UN80** and **Humanitarian Reset** processes. We encourage its continued alignment with the broader **UN system-wide reforms** to ensure a coherent, effective, and results-driven humanitarian response.

High Commissioner,

We commend your **steadfast leadership** in steering UNHCR through some of the most challenging years in its history.

We pay tribute to UNHCR staff and partners who, despite insecurity and limited means, continue to reach those most in need. Their dedication reflects **the true spirit of UNHCR's mandate**.

It is therefore crucial to **safeguard UNHCR's capacity** to deliver **life-saving protection and assistance**, and to pursue **durable solutions** for persons in need worldwide.

Mr. Chair,

As a **future member of the European Union** and a signatory to key international refugee and human rights instruments, **Montenegro remains firmly committed** to a strong and effective international protection system.

We have strengthened our asylum framework in line with the **Common European Asylum System** and with the **1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol**, fully upholding the right to seek and enjoy asylum, including the **principle of non-refoulement**.

Our ongoing efforts focus on enhancing **infrastructure**, improving **reception conditions**, and **expanding integration opportunities**, including through family reunification and enhanced access to the labour market.

The implementation of the **new EU Pact on Migration and Asylum** is of particular importance in this regard.

At the same time, securing **sustainable financing** for these efforts remains a pressing challenge.

This year also marks the **first anniversary of the Global Alliance to End Statelessness**, and Montenegro proudly reaffirms its commitment.

We have established procedures to ensure that **every child born on our territory is registered**, regardless of the parents' documentation status, and we have introduced procedures for **determining the status of stateless persons**.

Pending amendments to our **Law on Foreigners** - endorsed by the **European Commission** - will further strengthen the rights of stateless persons, particularly regarding access to socio-economic rights, healthcare, education, and documents.

Overall, Montenegro has made **steady progress** in building and strengthening its asylum and protection systems - both in the legal framework and in practical implementation.

However, challenges related to **infrastructure, accommodation capacity, and financial sustainability** call for continued investment and long-term planning.

By aligning our legislation and practice with **European standards**, and by faithfully implementing our international obligations, **Montenegro reaffirms its commitment** to the global refugee protection regime and to the principles of the **Global Compact on Refugees**.

Mr. Chair,

Montenegro stands ready to continue contributing - **in solidarity and partnership** - to uphold the principles of international protection and shared responsibility for those forced to flee.

Thank you.