

Elements of the High Commissioner's statement to the seventy-seventh plenary session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme

12 to 16 October 2026

In the High Commissioner's opening statement to the seventy-seventh plenary session of the Executive Committee, his first as High Commissioner, he will reflect on the global state of forced displacement at a time of persistent and emerging conflicts, geopolitical fragmentation, and growing pressure on the international humanitarian system. Drawing on his engagement with displaced people, host communities, and governments, he will address how the international community can respond more effectively to forced displacement, while underscoring that it is ultimately a consequence of failures of peace and political solutions.

Recalling the seventy-fifth anniversary of the 1951 Refugee Convention, the High Commissioner will reaffirm the enduring importance of the international refugee protection system. At a time when access to asylum and protection is under increasing pressure, he will call on States to uphold their obligations, including the principle of non-refoulement, while recognizing the legitimate challenges faced by countries managing increasingly complex refugee and mixed movements. He will emphasize that addressing these challenges is not incompatible with upholding refugee protection but requires practical cooperation and stronger international burden-and responsibility-sharing.

The High Commissioner will set out his vision for renewed attention and accelerated action on protection and solutions from the outset. Humanitarian assistance will remain indispensable wherever lives are at risk, but it cannot become the endpoint for millions of people living in displacement for years or decades. He will present his ambition of reducing by half the number of refugees in long-term displacement who remain dependent on humanitarian assistance by 2035. This 50 by 35 vision can be achieved by expanding opportunities for inclusion and self-reliance, while accelerating progress towards durable solutions—voluntary return where conditions permit, resettlement and complementary pathways, and opportunities for local integration or alternative legal status.

Emphasizing that achieving this ambition requires renewed international solidarity, the High Commissioner will recognize the generosity of refugee-hosting countries and communities, particularly in low- and middle-income countries, and call for greater investment in national systems, particularly education, as well as livelihoods and economic opportunities that benefit both refugees and host communities. Where conditions allow for voluntary return, he will urge humanitarian, development, peace, and financial actors to invest early in countries of return in order to facilitate sustainable and voluntary repatriation. He will also highlight the need to expand partnerships with international financial institutions, the private sector, civil society, and local and refugee-led organizations, while ensuring the meaningful participation of refugees in the decisions that affect them.

The High Commissioner will address the severe financial pressures facing UNHCR and the wider humanitarian system, emphasizing the consequences for displaced people and host communities, as well as the organization itself. He will outline UNHCR's efforts to broaden its resource base and ensure that scarce resources are directed where they can have the greatest impact. He will recognize the dedication and commitment of UNHCR colleagues through a period of difficult workforce reductions and significant organizational change, while emphasizing the importance of retaining the capacity and expertise necessary to deliver on the organization's mandate.

The High Commissioner will update Member States on the transformation underway within UNHCR to ensure that it is equipped for the challenges ahead. He will highlight efforts to form a more agile, focused, efficient, and field-oriented organization, with clearer accountabilities, greater delegation of decision-making, more effective shared services, and better use of technology, data, and artificial intelligence. He will situate these changes within wider reforms across the United Nations system, including the Humanitarian Reset and UN80 Initiative

Looking ahead to the Global Refugee Forum in 2027, the High Commissioner will call for renewed momentum in implementing commitments under the Global Compact on Refugees, translating pledges into tangible improvements for refugees and the communities that host them, and exploring new avenues for international cooperation. He will call on United Nations Member States and partners across the humanitarian, development, and peace sectors to work together towards a system that responds effectively when people are forced to flee, while creating the conditions for more people to return home, rebuild their lives, and move beyond displacement.

UNHCR
24 September 2026