



UNHCR Executive Committee

12-16 October 2026

Agenda item: General Debate

Statement by the EU and its Member States

Chair,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

1. High Commissioner, thank you for your statement. We recognise your leadership as you take forward UNHCR through a period of significant change.
2. We reaffirm our strong support for UNHCR's core protection mandate and the Centrality of Protection. Dedicated protection expertise and capacity, including on addressing the impact of sexual and gender-based and on disability inclusion, must be preserved through the current restructuring. We stand with UNHCR personnel facing these changes and commend their continued dedication, in particular those who risk their lives to deliver protection and assistance.
3. Seventy-five years on, the Refugee Convention remains the cornerstone of international refugee protection. The EU and its Member States reaffirm their unwavering commitment to the Convention and to UNHCR as its guardian, and we look forward to the High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection in December as an opportunity to strengthen its effective implementation and contribute toward making asylum systems work better in the current context.
4. We commend the generosity of countries and communities, who continue to support refugees. We will continue shouldering our responsibilities globally supporting other host countries, promoting durable and sustainable solutions and self-reliance. EU Member States host millions of refugees and other persons in need of international protection from countries across all regions of the world, including those fleeing Russia's illegal, unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine. Thanks to the Temporary Protection Directive, now extended until March 2028, 4.4 million Ukrainians have benefited from access to accommodation, education, employment, healthcare and social protection. At the same time, we continue to play a leading role in supporting humanitarian and longer-term responses from Sudan to Gaza, Syria, Lebanon, Myanmar and beyond. We also continue to offer safe and legal pathways, with the first-ever Union Resettlement Plan (2026–2027) now being rolled out contributing to global responsibility-sharing.

5. Amid continued financial shortfalls and the ongoing restructuring of UNHCR, the EU and its Member States remain stable, reliable and strategic partners to UNHCR, having collectively allocated around USD 1.2 billion in 2025.
6. We appreciate the transparency shown in consultations on the new Strategic Directions and the hybrid budget model. We welcome the '50 by 35' vision, which is consistent with key elements of our own policies towards refugees. We hope that together, these advances will bring greater clarity on how UNHCR is prioritising available funding, while ensuring appropriate consultation with its implementing partners right from the start. We look forward to receiving further updates on how these changes will be operationalised across staffing and country level operations, and how progress will be measured.
7. The '50by35' vision cannot be achieved by UNHCR alone: it requires an enabling environment such as - legal documentation, freedom of movement, the right to work, access and inclusion in nationally led education, health, social protection and financial services- underpinned by stronger engagement with host governments, IFIs and the private sector and the wider UN development system in line with UN80, and with support from bilateral donors.
8. Today's mixed movements are increasingly complex, with persons fleeing persecution often travelling alongside others moving for different reasons. Along these routes, many face serious risks, including loss of life, trafficking and exploitation by transnational criminal networks. A route-based approach can help address these challenges by identifying vulnerabilities early, strengthening cooperation among relevant UN agencies and partners, and ensuring coordinated responses, including the timely identification of those in need of international protection. The EU and its Member States condemn any attempts to instrumentalise migrants and asylum seekers for political motives by orchestrating their flow across EU external borders. We are furthermore concerned that implementation of these attempts can lead to serious human rights violations.
9. The EU Pact on Migration and Asylum as part of our comprehensive approach, balances -from a human rights-based approach- solidarity and responsibility between EU Member States. It provides more efficient, safe, predictable procedures, and stronger safeguards for persons with specific needs and in vulnerable situations. These efforts complement our bilateral and regional partnerships supporting a comprehensive, rights-based, whole-of-route approach, as also reflected in the Pact for the Mediterranean.
10. We invite UNHCR to play a leading role in advancing the Humanitarian Reset, ensuring its restructuring aligns with UN80 processes and fosters close cooperation with IOM, including through a One UN approach.
11. Finally, we urge stronger internal controls, audit, and investigative functions, despite budget constraints. In addition, protection from sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment

remains a non-negotiable priority, and we support a continued victim-survivor-centred approach.

Thank you.