
UNHCR- Executive Committee
70th Session, 7-11 October 2019**General Debate**

Mr. Chairperson ,

Let me start by commending the excellent work performed by UNHCR in leading the global response to the refugee crisis today.

We see value in the annual meeting of the Executive Committee, because it provides us with an opportunity to focus our attention on the needs of millions of people who are currently on the move, seeking a better life or escaping danger. We would also take this opportunity to acknowledge the work done by all UNHCR's staff, people committed to helping refugees wherever they may be, often putting their own lives at risk.

We took note of some key messages included in the opening remarks of the High Commissioner Grandi, who ~~once again~~ pointed out the incredible challenges that the international community faces with regards to refugee response, but also showed us some progress achieved. We clearly need to keep working together.

This session of the Executive Committee has a unique character of course, since it started with a High Level Segment on Statelessness. With so many other things happening, this mid-way stocktaking exercise initiated by UNHCR enables us to focus our attention on this very important issue. The information received, and the discussions that have ^{been} taking place during this week to be followed by others, will no doubt provide us with the basis for a much needed further deliberations on how to improve the situation of stateless persons.

Statelessness is not unfamiliar to us, as it used to be a feature in the history of the Jewish people, and also led to some ^{very} tragic consequences.

Mr. Chairperson;

We would also like to welcome the statement presented by the High Commissioner, and we thank him for the information provided regarding UNHCR's transformation. We believe that even a well-functioning organization should always look for ways to adjust to changing realities and challenges, as well as improve efficiencies.

We would be keen to learn more about the High Commissioner's ideas regarding decentralization and regionalization, the degree of delegation of authorities to the field and the envisaged timeline for such important changes. Moreover, we would like to know if those changes can be executed by the High Commissioner himself, or if at some point the Standing Committee or the Executive Committee would be required to intervene.

Finally, we would like to comment on another important topic for Israel. In his statement, the High Commissioner made a reference to the work the organization is doing on addressing sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment.

We have ^{studied with interest} read ~~in detail~~ the many reports that will be presented during this session. Fortunately, this topic has also been addressed in the report by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), including some recommendations, and more interestingly, as part of the report by the Inspector General's Office. This latter is of key importance, since on the one hand, the Inspector General reported the collaboration of the Investigation Service with several entities, and the key role it plays in the development of the UN-RIS' guidelines for investigations concerning sexual misconduct. On the other, the report acknowledges that sexual exploitation and abuse is the second main category of misconduct complaints received, representing 15%, with sexual harassment as the fifth. We should highlight that this same order is presented with respect to the open investigations.

In this regard, we acknowledge the challenges presented by the Inspector General, in terms of overload, resources, etc. We recognize also that the number of open investigations have increased, and when referring to sexual exploitation and abuse, an important number have been completed in an appropriate timeline.

We would like to encourage UNHCR to increase its efforts to address this issue. We would like to have even better figures when referring to the opening of new cases when alleging sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment.

If we want to send a clear message that such reprehensible behavior will not be tolerated, we need to ensure a speedy response to each allegation, with a strong investigation and possible prosecution, in full respect of due process and guarantees. In parallel, if there are victims, we owe them a swift response, to show them that they are not alone, and that we are all committed towards the eradication of such behavior.

In conclusion, Mr. chairperson, let me wish us all a fruitful and constructive discussion during this meeting of the Executive Committee.

I thank you.