



Republic of North Macedonia
Ministry of Interior

Department for European Union and International Cooperation

Sector for International Cooperation

Section for Multilateral Cooperation and Translation

**Addressing of the Minister of Interior
Oliver Spasovski**

At the

73rd Session of the Executive Committee of UNHCR

October, 2022

Distinguished High Commissioner,

Dear colleagues,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me at the very beginning to express my pleasure that for several years now I have had the honor to personally attend and address the regular annual session of the Executive Committee of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. I would like to thank the High Commissioner and all those present for their engagement and also use the opportunity to wish you all a successful work.

The health challenges imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic have marked these last few years. This year, the number of global challenges we are facing, which are a substantial threat to the global security architecture and the existing international legal order, and which have a direct impact on all spheres, including the work of the UNHCR, is even greater.

Hence, such meeting opportunities, under the auspices of the United Nations Organization and its agencies, become even more valuable in the attempt through the exchange of ideas, experiences and mutual communication to try to find and channel the solutions to the challenges, in a humane and dignified direction, and above all to preserve peace as the prime, basic and most important value of the United Nations and of humanity itself.

The Republic of North Macedonia and the Ministry of Interior, which I am honored to lead, have always had a proactive and open approach and have always been and will continue to be an active and credible partner of the United Nations, and especially of the UNHCR.

The Republic of North Macedonia is a contracting party to the key international instruments of the UN, and in the field of action and mandate of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, I will mention the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, the Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees and the UN Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness since 1961.

Regarding the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact on Migration, the state has given and continues to give strong support and we have made several endeavour that for the most part have been accomplished.

For a long time, we have been working on harmonizing our legislation with the European legislation, many documents have been adopted in the field of asylum, i.e. migrations, EU directives and they are highly incorporated in our legislation.

In clear circumstances of a global pandemic, adhering and complying with the recommendations of the European Commission and the health regulations, we were among the first to begin with conducting interviews with asylum seekers through an online platform, during which - and this is of vital importance - we managed to preserve the health of both asylum seekers and our employees. At the same time, for the entire duration of the state of emergency, we ensured unhindered access to the procedure for recognition of the right to asylum for all persons who were in need of international protection.

From this viewpoint, allow me to note that among our main priorities in this plan is the deepening and maintenance of international cooperation with the countries of the region, with the countries of transit and with the countries of origin, with EU agencies - first of all, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, EUROPOL, European Union Agency for Asylum, United Nations agencies -

IOM, UNHCR, other relevant international organizations, as well as through active participation in numerous international and regional platforms, initiatives and processes - Salzburg Forum, Budapest Process, Prague Process, Joint Coordination Platform, Police Cooperation Convention for South East Europe, etc.

Several projects are underway with the aim of further harmonization with EU standards and not only in the area of migration management but also in border management as a whole. Last year, the twinning project "Aligning the national systems with the EU and the Schengen requirements for border management" was successfully finalized, and within this framework the National Strategy for Integrated Border Management of the Republic of North Macedonia was drawn up, in accordance with the European concept for Integrated Border Management.

I am pleased to inform you on a significant step towards enhanced border management and management of irregular migration, which is a common interest of both North Macedonia and the European Union, and of course UNHCR. Namely, I am especially glad to inform this esteemed audience that the negotiations on the Status Agreement with the European Border and Coast Guard Agency have been completed and that it is expected to be signed very soon as the first agreement at the level of the EU - North Macedonia, as a country that has also recently started negotiations for membership in the EU. As the European Commission announced, the agreement will contribute to the fight against irregular migration and, in general, will contribute to enhanced security at the external borders of the EU, that is, in the region.

Dear,

The changed international positioning of North Macedonia with the admission to NATO in March 2020. and the progress made since 2017 in the rule of law, democracy, human rights, the development of the model of multi-ethnic relations, supplemented by the dedicated commitment to regional cooperation and good neighbourhood relations, contributed to North Macedonia assuming the role of OSCE Chairmanship from the following year.

In these eventful times, I hope and appeal for dialogue, cooperation, I call for enhanced international efforts, for encouraging global dialogue that promotes a culture of tolerance and peace at all levels, based on respecting the human rights and international law, and I refer to a commitment to responsibility and a dedicated and serious effort in solving current global challenges, good neighbourly relations and restoration of stability.

Among other things, it is my pleasure and honor to inform you that the efforts of the Republic of North Macedonia as the OSCE Chairmanship country in the coming year 2023 will be pointed to this direction.

As for North Macedonia, I assure you that we remain a strong supporter of the UN, a dedicated and responsible partner in the global dialogue and a strong and as such a generally recognized generator and pillar of peace, stability and security in the Balkan and European region, and beyond.

Thank you.