

# PODIUM VERSION

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## **Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Program General Debate**

### **Statement by the Government of Canada Delivered by H.E. Leslie E. Norton**

Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations Office at Geneva

to the  
71<sup>st</sup> SESSION  
of the  
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE  
OF THE UNITED NATIONS  
HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

Geneva, 5 – 9 October 2020

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## **Comité Exécutif du Haut-Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les Réfugiés Énoncé général**

### **Déclaration du Gouvernement du Canada Prononcée par H.E. Leslie E. Norton**

Ambassadrice et Représentante permanente auprès de l'Office des Nations Unies et de la Conférence du désarmement à Genève

À la 71<sup>ième</sup> SESSION  
du  
COMITÉ EXÉCUTIF  
DU HAUT COMMISSARIAT DES  
NATIONS UNIES POUR LES RÉFUGIÉS

Genève, 5 – 9 octobre 2020

## **71<sup>st</sup> Session of the UNHCR Executive Committee (2020)**

### **Government of Canada:**

#### **General Statement**

Chair, High Commissioner Grandi, distinguished delegates; it is a great honour to address you today.

On behalf of the Canadian delegation, I wish to thank the High Commissioner for his opening remarks and for his strong and effective leadership over the last year. We commend the Agency, its staff, and its partners for their dedication to seeking protection and solutions for refugees and other persons of concern during these challenging and unpredictable times

Canada recognizes the many consequences of COVID-19 on the world, on refugees, on all persons of concern to UNHCR, and on the work of UNHCR and other humanitarian partners. While the pandemic and the policies of lock-down have had profound effects on communities and economies around the globe, Canada notes the particular impact the pandemic has had on refugees.

As border restrictions compound existing challenges to the international protection regime, and economic shocks continue to be felt, livelihoods continue to be jeopardized. For women and girls, who have seen their economic opportunities decimated by the spread of the virus, the increased threat of sexual and gender-based violence is very real.

Despite these challenges, we have seen the many ways that refugees have been at the fore of responding to the pandemic. Canada recognizes and celebrates the work of refugee-led organizations who are essential to responding to the pandemic in their communities. Their leadership and innovation further illustrates the value of their full and equal inclusion in refugee responses, as detailed in the Global Compact on Refugees.

Mister Chair, the challenges of the global pandemic have driven home the importance of close collaboration and multilateralism during this time of crisis. We must recognize now, more than ever, the need to strengthen our efforts towards increased responsibility sharing. Canada would like to call on the international community to remain committed to the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees and to more equitable and predictable responsibility sharing for both refugees and host communities.

We must not let the progress we have made slip, particularly regarding critical advancements towards self-reliance, or in seeing through the commitments made at the Global Refugee Forum.

Mister Chair, Canada was proud to stand alongside the international community at the Forum in December last year to mark the first major milestone in the implementation of the Global Compact on refugees. The hundreds of pledges made towards improving outcomes for refugees, asylum seekers and host communities are just as relevant and important today as they were ten months ago.

Building on our Forum pledges, Canada will be furthering its engagement on refugee education in the coming months, as we work with colleagues in the international community to develop a campaign to promote education for refugee and internally displaced children.

Of the three Support Platforms launched in December, Canada has also been working closely with Spain and the MIRPS Support Platform membership to advance the principles of the Global Compact on Refugees in the North of Central America. As part of this work, Canada will seek to assume the role of Chair for the MIRPS Support Platform in 2021.

Mister Chair, as refugees have taken up positions at the front-line of the pandemic response, meaningful refugee participation in the work of the international refugee system should remain a priority. At the Global Refugee Forum, Canada was proud to include a Refugee Advisor as a member of our Delegation. We are pleased to be able to replicate that experience again now.

Alongside our longstanding civil society colleagues, we are fortunate to benefit from the contributions of Malual Bol Kiir, the Refugee Advisor to our Canadian delegation this year.

In closing, as we stand in solidarity with refugees and the communities who generously host them. We call on ExCom member states to continue their strong support for UNHCR and for comprehensive refugee responses. UNHCR staff and implementing partners continue to provide protection and life-saving assistance around the world despite numerous challenges: worsening crises, growing needs, and persistent funding shortfalls. We commend you. UNHCR has done its part to stay the course and deliver in this crisis and we must stand with them.

Thank you.