



Geneva

Executive Committee of the
High Commissioner's Programme
Seventy-First session

General Debate

Statement by Sweden

H.E. Ms Anna Jardfelt, Permanent Representative to the UN

Geneva, 6 October 2020

Mr Chair, Mr High Commissioner, Excellencies, Colleagues and Friends,

Sweden aligns itself with the statement made by the European Union and we offer the following statement in national capacity:

Mr High Commissioner,

I highly commend you and your staff at UNHCR for your dedication and hard work. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic you remain determined to deliver protection and humanitarian assistance to refugees and other persons of concern across the globe, often in the face of considerable risks. Sweden values UNHCR's global emergency response to support refugees, internally displaced persons, stateless persons, returnees, host communities and governments during this crisis.

We're encouraged to see that in the midst of the pandemic, UNHCR has also made headway on important reform processes. Sweden fully supports the ongoing transformation of the organisation.

Mr Chair,

When we gathered here last year, we could not imagine that we would have to respond to a global pandemic in 2020. This year has demonstrated the unpredictability of crisis, the increased vulnerability of refugee women, men and children all over the world and the importance of flexible funding in crisis response.

The Strategic Partnership Agreement between Sweden and UNHCR is the sign of our support, trust and commitment to multiannual, predictable and flexible funding.

Sweden is proud to be the number one donor of unearmarked funding to the UNHCR, and we strongly encourage other donors to increase their core funding and to enter into multi-year agreements. This allows UNHCR to prioritise, to use resources efficiently and to adapt to unpredicted situations. If ever in doubt, the pandemic has proved how crucial flexible funding is, in order to swiftly adapt to unforeseen events.

Mr Chair,

Solidarity and responsibility for persons in need of international protection is crucial. The situation in the Mediterranean Sea continues to be deeply worrying. Sweden has for a long time taken a large responsibility for asylum seekers and we uphold a yearly resettlement quota of 5000 places. Saving lives is the no:1 priority. 183 000 persons who fled the conflict in Syria were granted permanent residence permits in Sweden since the conflict started. We are deeply concerned about the situation in Moria, Lesbos, and we thank the UNHCR for assisting the affected vulnerable persons in need. In addition to contributing through our core support, Sweden also sent material aid to Greece, which was distributed through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism's Emergency Response Coordination Centre.

In Yemen, the world's largest humanitarian crisis, the risk of outright famine is immediate. The global pandemic has added another layer to the catastrophe. Sweden fully supports the UN Humanitarian Response Plan and UNHCR's refugee response in Yemen.

The worsened situation for refugees also highlights the urgency to implement the Global Compact on Refugees, as a collective responsibility. Sweden is determined to implement the pledges made at the Global Refugee Forum in December last year, including by promoting a global increase of

resettlement, strengthening asylum systems, reducing the negative impact on the climate and environment in the response to refugee situations and supporting UNESCO in strengthening national education systems.

Mr. High Commissioner,

Finally, I would like to assure you that we will do our utmost to keep supporting you and your staff during this pandemic and beyond. We look forward to continuing our close cooperation with the UNHCR.

I thank you!