

PODIUM VERSION

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**Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Program
Protection Debate**

Statement by the Government of Canada

Delivered by Ms. Susan Dragan

First Secretary (Migration and Refugee Affairs)
Permanent Mission of Canada, Geneva

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

Geneva, 5 – 9 October 2020

Vérifier à l'audition

Déclaration du Gouvernement du Canada

Prononcée par Mme. Susan Dragan

Première Secrétaire
Mission Permanente du Canada, Genève

À la 71^{ième} SESSION
du
COMITÉ EXÉCUTIF
DU HAUT COMMISSARIAT DES
NATIONS UNIES POUR LES RÉFUGIÉS

Genève, 5 – 9 octobre 2020

**Government of Canada Intervention to the 71st Session of the
UNHCR Executive Committee (2020)**

Protection Statement

Thank you Chair, High Commissioner Grandi, distinguished delegates.

When the international community embarked on the journey to revitalize the international protection regime in 2016, guided by the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, we collectively determined that an unprecedented level of international cooperation was needed to respond to unprecedented levels of forced displacement. We were galvanized to develop and affirm the Global Compact on Refugees in 2018, and to make concrete pledges in accordance with its objectives at the Global Refugee Forum in December 2019.

Unfortunately, Mister Chair, we have all been consumed with efforts to curtail and respond to the current global health pandemic. This focus has detracted and diminished the necessary equitable sharing of our collective responsibilities as expressed in the Global Compact on Refugees.

It is clear to Canada that the international community cannot afford to deviate from the path of heightened cooperation to which we committed.

For this reason, Canada welcomes all the more positive measures being taken in the current difficult environment, including the continued willingness of host States to extend vital protection space, and the promise and potential of the newly launched Support Platforms.

For its part, Canada will continue to contribute to responsibility-sharing in these exceptional times:

- Canada has been working to resettle as many refugees as conditions allow, including those in the most urgent need, as identified by UNHCR.
- As Co-Chairs of the 2019-2020 Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement, Canada and UNHCR successfully delivered a full program of activities in the past year to support the implementation of the Three-Year Strategy on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways, building on the efforts at the Global Refugee Forum to expand solutions for refugees.
- Canada, alongside UNHCR and our other core partners in the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative, will continue our strong support for the development of community sponsorship for refugee protection.
- As part of its ongoing commitment to complementary pathways, Canada will admit 500 refugees over the next two years through the Economic

Mobility Pathways Project, to facilitate access to permanent residence via existing economic immigration programs.

- Canada also recently assumed the role of State Lead in the Global Task Force on Third Country Employment Pathways, where it expects to contribute to building the global capacity of this innovative pathway. Work is underway to establish membership in the Task Force, and a soft launch is expected to take place before March 2021.

- Canada will also continue its funding support to UNHCR and other humanitarian partners to help the Agency protect and assist refugees and other persons of concern, including our increased support due to the additional impact of COVID-19.

- On September 25, Canada launched the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies 2021-2025 Road Map to identify opportunities for collective action. Canada is calling on all partners to increase efforts to mitigate the risk of gender-based violence and to ensure humanitarian assistance meets the needs and priorities of people in vulnerable situations, especially women and girls.

Mister Chair, the selfless contributions of asylum claimants to Canada's health care system during this health crisis has provided us with a clear

demonstration of what persons seeking protection can, and are, willing to do for the national good of their country of asylum.

This is why, earlier this year, the Canadian Government announced measures to grant permanent residency to asylum claimants who had cared for the most vulnerable in long-term care homes and other medical facilities.

We know there have been many such acts of altruism and our hope is that the current pandemic may, in some way, help to change the refugee narrative from helpless dependents, to individuals able to actively contribute and participate in the well-being of their new country.

Mister Chair, Canada commends UNHCR for the degree of agility it has demonstrated in response to the global health crisis, and its inspiring commitment to “stay and deliver” on assistance and protection to refugees. Canada calls on all Executive Committee Member States to now, in turn, “stay and deliver” on refugee protection.

To be clear, the choice is to continue to pursue our collective commitment to revitalizing the international protection regime, or inevitably later face the high cost of inaction.