

EXCOM 72 Statement

Thank you, Mr Chairman,

Egypt aligns itself with the statements delivered by the geographical and political groups to which it belongs.

Egypt would like to extend its sincere appreciation to the High Commissioner. We are grateful to UNHCR and its staff for continuing to “stay and deliver” throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and other concerning humanitarian crises. We appreciate your efforts to provide protection and assistance to persons falling within UNHCR’s mandate in accordance with the Strategic directions.

Mr. Chairman,

On the seventieth anniversary of the 1951 Convention, Egypt reiterates its historic and long-standing commitment to grant asylum and protection to refugees. Egypt hosts more than 265,000 refugees and asylum seekers registered with UNHCR, most of whom originate from areas of protracted crises. This is in addition to a growing number of persons fleeing crises and situations of violence, estimated at over 5 million from 60 nationalities. Once in Egypt, they enjoy complete freedom of movement, access to basic services, entrepreneurship opportunities, infrastructure and subsidies on an equal basis with Egyptians. We are currently consulting with UNHCR and other relevant organisations to adopt an innovative, comprehensive approach to respond to their needs.

Despite the heavy toll of COVID-19, Egypt’s policy emphasized the inclusion of refugees in all pandemic responses.

Refugees have access to universal primary and preventive health care, in addition to secondary and tertiary services through public hospitals, in cooperation with UNHCR and WHO. Refugee women have access to complaints mechanisms for violence against women and shelters for women survivors of violence.

Egypt is committed to access to education for refugees. All Arabic-speaking refugee students are enrolled in public schools, while thousands benefit from fee exemptions at the university level and from scholarship schemes.

Throughout the pandemic, social assistance measures such as deferral and exemption from school fees were implemented. For two years, public schools have admitted refugees whose residence permits expired due to the interruption of

UNHCR's work. We are pleased that UNHCR is gradually addressing the backlog in registering and renewing permits.

Such commitments increase economic pressure during an already fragile situation, underscoring the need to achieve equitable and sustainable burden sharing in line with the Global Compact.

Mr. Chairman,

Since the GRF, Egypt has been drafting national asylum legislation. We hope that refugee hosting countries, including Egypt, will receive guarantees of international support commensurate with their contributions. In the planning of assistance projects, national governments should be consulted in order to align such projects with development efforts to enhance resilience, guarantee long-term solutions for refugees and host communities, and avoid parallel structures. This is particularly important since more than 50% of refugees in Egypt have resided there for more than a decade.

Egypt was active during the GRF in advocating for a comprehensive approach to addressing the root causes of refugee crises and creating enabling conditions for return.

We are at the forefront of efforts to operationalise the AU Policy on Post Conflict Reconstruction and Development and are currently hosting the African Union Centre dedicated to this issue. Egypt also organises the annual Aswan Forum for Sustainable Peace and Development which has called for a paradigm shift to prevention and resolving- rather than managing- situations of forced displacement. Egypt will continue to advance this agenda, including during the High-Level Officials Meeting and we are discussing with UNHCR ways to promote more concerted international effort in this field.

Egypt recognises that water scarcity and environmental degradation, which are compounded by climate change, compel people to move. It is imperative for the international community to collectively address these phenomena, increase resilience and focus on prevention.

Egypt is concerned with the persistence of conflict and challenging humanitarian situation in the region, which threatens to increase refugee and secondary movements to North Africa and the Mediterranean. Egypt has played its part in preventing any person from embarking on the unsafe and perilous journey from

its Mediterranean coastline since 2016, through a comprehensive legal framework and strategy. This effort remains an exclusively national endeavour.

Mr. Chairman,

Egypt will continue to advocate for the “One Refugee Approach” so that burden and responsibility sharing may benefit all refugee communities equally, without discrimination based on national origin. This requires a commitment from donors to addressing the funding gap, and more unearmarked contributions. We further call on the international community to step up resettlement efforts taking into consideration that only 10% of newly registered refugees in Egypt are resettled in third countries. This is a critically important element of equitable burden and responsibility sharing.

I thank you