

Statement by
His Excellency Mr. Rongvudhi Virabutr,
Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative of Thailand,
Chargé d' affaires a.i.,
General Debate at the High-Level Officials Meeting (HLOM)
14 – 15 December 2021
(3 minutes)

**High Commissioner,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,**

1. On behalf of my delegation, I wish to thank UNHCR, the Swiss Confederation and the co-conveners for organising this important meeting to take stock on the achievements made in GCR implementation, and to identify ways forward.

2. Despite clear evidence of progress shown in the GCR Indicator Report launched just last month, **many challenges remain**, such as lack of sufficient funding to support refugees and host communities, increasing numbers of conflicts worldwide that force more people to flee, and limited places for resettlement, all are compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic. These only underscored the **growing needs** of displaced persons that **require greater collective efforts** to address.

Chairperson,

3. Although Thailand is not party to the 1951 Refugee Convention, we have long been committed to our humanitarian tradition, placed importance on addressing root causes in countries of origin, and been providing protection and assistance needed to displaced persons residing in the country. This includes the access to treatment and vaccination for all displaced persons in the context of COVID-19.

4. Thailand continues to fully support GCR and remain committed to its implementation including through pledges made during the first Global Refugee Forum (GRF). While the majority of pledges are **in implementation stage**, we wish to highlight **some key progress** as follows;

First, Thailand continues to host over 77,000 **Myanmar Displaced Persons** for almost 40 years now. Thailand and Myanmar had been working closely on their return in a safe, voluntary, dignified and sustainable manner through the established mechanisms resulting in a total of 1,039 returnees to date. Although this bilateral mechanism on the repatriation has been stalled by the pandemic and political situation in Myanmar, Thailand will continue to cooperate with relevant parties in order to find sustainable solutions.

Second, through the **National Screening Mechanism (NSM)** soon to be operationalized, people in need of protection will be granted legal status to temporary stay in Thailand as well as rights to access basic services necessary for dignified livelihood. UNHCR has been playing a vital role in capacity-building for officials in this regard.

Third, Thailand has adopted a **whole-of-society** and **whole-of-government approach** and has been working relentlessly on alternatives to detention for children in immigration detention centres, and ensuring its effective application through the MOU on no-child detention and its SOPs.

In addition, we will continue to work on tackling and advocating for the eradication of **statelessness**.

Chairperson,

5. Over the past few days, while we heard that much more need to be done, it is also clear that **partnership** and **cooperation** are key in effectively address this issue that has a human face to it – key in making a real difference to human lives.

6. Looking ahead, **only when we do our part** we can then **achieve a genuine equitable burden- and responsibility sharing**. Thailand stands ready to work with our partners in this common endeavour.

I thank you.

(478 words)