

Statement for the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme

Seventy-third session

Geneva, 10-14 October 2022

Distinguished Delegates,

Mr. High Commissioner,

I use this opportunity to express our appreciation for your and your Office's efforts to support refugees and IDP.

Recent turbulent developments increased the total number of forcefully displaced globally up to a 100¹ million. Only since February, more than 18 million Ukrainians² forcefully left their homes because of Russia's premeditated, unprovoked and unjustified full-scale aggression. We condemn the latest indiscriminate bombings of civilians in Zaporozhzhia and Kiev.

We appreciate the efforts of UNHCR to alleviate the plight of forcefully displaced from Ukraine and countries, which opened their doors to all those fleeing their homes in pursuit of safety.

At this point, Georgia has received and is supporting more than 28 000 war-affected Ukrainians. My government implements a special care project for those, who are temporarily unable to return to their country.

In total more than 2100 Ukrainian students were admitted to schools in various municipalities of Georgia, Ukrainian language sectors were opened at two public schools – in Tbilisi and Batumi (for over 1300 students).

Mr/Ms, Chairman,

The Government of Georgia tightly cooperates with the UNHCR and other international organizations while guaranteeing efficient asylum procedure as well as socio-economic assistance to the persons of concern. We highly value the UNHCR's contribution throughout the past years in addressing the humanitarian needs of conflict-affected people, including enhancement of the asylum system and assistance in creating effective policies for refugees.

Georgia spares no effort to ensure fair and efficient asylum system for all asylum seekers. fleeing from threats that impose real risk to their life and health. In the recent years, Georgia has strengthened its relevant legislative and institutional framework. Being in full compliance with the 1951 Geneva Convention and the 1967 protocol, Georgian asylum legislation is being approximated with the EU legislation. Within the scope of Association Agreement and Visa Liberalization with the EU, significant results have been achieved.

As a result of ongoing refugee crisis, since 2012 Georgia granted an international protection (Georgia has received approximately 12,000 asylum-seekers) to more than 2,000 asylum-seekers. Since 2015 refugees and humanitarian status holders are involved in state programs, providing vocational training and upgrading professional skills of job seekers.

¹ <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/insights/explainers/100-million-forcibly-displaced.html>

² <https://www.unhcr.org/ukraine-emergency.html>

Georgia has been very active during preparatory and adoption process of the Global Compact on Refugees and submitted nine pledges at the first Global Refugee Forum in Geneva in 2019.

Excellences,

Georgians are especially aware of the devastating impact of Russia's aggression against Ukraine. We have ourselves experienced aggression and occupation by Russia. As a result of a multiple waves of ethnic cleansing carried out by Russian Federation in Georgia's of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali /South Ossetia regions, since 1991 more than half a million Georgian citizens have been expelled from their homes to become IDPs and refugees. They are still deprived of the right to return to their homes. Russia's continuous destructive actions in occupied territories put many more at risk of becoming IDPs.

In this regard, let me recall the judgement of the ECHR (*on the case of GEORGIA v. RUSSIA (II)*) which legally established the responsibility of Russia - the authority exercising effective control over the regions - for the violation of fundamental norms of the international law, including the right of IDPs and refugees to return to their homes. It concluded that Russia has an obligation to enable inhabitants of the Georgian origin to return to their respective homes.

Furthermore, the recent ICC decision to issue the arrest warrants for individuals bearing criminal responsibility for the war crimes committed during 2008 Georgia-Russia war, clearly reconfirms Russia's responsibility for gross violations committed against the Georgian population.

These actions represent a blatant violation of the fundamental principles of international law, the UN Charter and the EU-mediated 12 August 2008 Ceasefire Agreement.

In this context the achievement of tangible results within the Geneva International Discussions (GID), which is the only format with the Russian Federation for addressing the issues related to implementation of Russia's international obligations, including return of the IDPs and refugees to their homes - is of particular importance. In this regard, let me also stress the important role of the UNHCR in the humanitarian Working Group of the GID.

Additionally, we are actively using other available platforms to make the voices of the IDPs heard and to ensure their fundamental right to safe and dignified return to their homes. UNGA annual resolution on the status of IDPs and refugees from the Russia-occupied regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali is extremely important in this regard. Being purely humanitarian in its nature, the resolution recognizes the right of internally displaced persons and refugees to return to their homes.

Until IDPs will return to their homes voluntarily, safely and with dignity, the Government of Georgia makes every effort to promote their socio-economic integration and improve living conditions. It is one of the top priorities for the Government.

In conclusion, let me reiterate Georgia's full support to the UNHCR's endeavours to support millions of refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced, and stateless persons worldwide.

Thank you.