

**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA TO THE UN
OFFICE AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN GENEVA**

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67th Session of the Executive Committee of the UNHCR

STATEMENT

by

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Mr. President,
Mr. High Commissioner,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by expressing my appreciation to the High Commissioner for his compelling and inspiring introductory statement. And his encouraging vision of the UNHCR and its role in the five areas of strategic focus he underscored. At the same time, I wish him a successful term of office in this challenging time of the biggest refugee crisis since the World War II, with the UNHCR being on the frontlines of the global response.

The delegation of the Republic of Macedonia aligned with the statement of the European Union, but I will address a number of issues in the national capacity.

Regretfully, the protracted conflicts and negative security developments continue to intensify the exodus and forced displacement. The figures are utterly incomprehensible, more than 65 million people on the move. The international community must continue to provide substantial assistance to the countries concerned and other regional stakeholders in ensuring secure and stable environment and address the root causes of insecurity. This especially applies to the Syrian conflict, which entered its sixth year and continues to cause an unspeakable loss of life and appalling displacements, making it one of the largest humanitarian emergencies ever.

In the face of new and emerging challenges, we have seen partnerships, solidarity, burden sharing and generosity by host countries that have demonstrated how States take their international responsibilities with utmost commitment. But there is still much to be done, as we are looking for solutions.

In this context, we welcome this year's concerted efforts of the international community under the UN auspices to bring forward the most critical humanitarian issue of the present time - the large movements of refugees and migrants, starting from holding the first ever World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul in May 2016 to the very recent High-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly addressing the large movements of refugees and migrants and its outcome – the New York Declaration on migrants and refugees. The adopted declaration represents a powerful platform stating clearly that any prospects of refugee crises resolution require collaborative international responses based on solidarity and responsibility-sharing, and on international human rights and humanitarian law. We believe that the New York outcome opens up a new era in which the political declarations and legal commitments must be finally translated into reality and that the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework, to be further developed by the UNHCR, provides guidelines for how this should happen.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the last session we have briefed in detail about the challenges of Macedonia being one of the countries along the so-called Balkan route. Let me remind you that more than 700 thousand migrants/refugees crossed the borders of Macedonia in 2015 and somewhat less than 90.000 did the same until the closure of the Balkan route following the EU-Turkey Statement of 18 March 2016.

Currently 214 migrants/asylum seekers are staying in Macedonia in the 2 Transit Relief Centres, including 27 asylum seekers.

The Macedonian Authorities continue to handle the refugee crisis in a responsible and professional manner, with humanitarian assistance and treatment provided in accordance with all European and international standards. The Macedonian authorities are also looking into ways for

providing certain trainings and educational programmes in these extraordinary circumstances for the children temporary situated at two (2) Transit Relief Centres. Furthermore, a new Integration Strategy for Refugees and Foreigners is being drafted, as a follow up to the previous relevant experiences in Macedonia.

The border management cooperation with partner countries and organizations continues. For example, in August 2016, a total number of 588 border patrols were carried out jointly with police officers coming from Austria, Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia, Slovakia and Hungary.

On the other hand, since the closure of the Western Balkans route, there has been an increase of varying intensity in attempts of illegal crossing. Between 1 January and 31 August 2016, around 33.000 illegal border crossing attempts were registered on the Macedonian-Greek border. In the same period, the Macedonian police documented 94 cases related to smuggling of a total number of 1672 migrants. 63 criminal charges were pressed against 71 individuals, 13 of which foreign nationals.

Mr. Chairperson,

At the end I would like to reaffirm the vital role of the UNHCR in lending a hand to those who desperately need international protection worldwide. I would like to conclude by reemphasizing the excellent cooperation we have with the UNHCR Office in Macedonia who continues to be a reliable partner in helping us deal with the challenges in the areas of your mandate. We are also grateful for the concrete financial, technical and expert support by many partner countries and other regional and international organizations.

Thank you.