

Statement
by Ambassador LEE Taeho of the Republic of Korea
General Debate of
the 72nd UNHCR Executive Committee (ExCOM)
(Tuesday, 6 October, 11:30 / 5 min)

Thank you, Vice Chairperson,

At the outset, let me express my appreciation for your leadership in presiding over this 72nd ExCOM plenary session. I also thank High Commissioner Grandi for his opening remarks to set the tone of our deliberation.

Vice Chairperson,

At this Executive Committee every year over the past several years, we shared our collective worries about ‘a record-high numbers of forced displacement’ and ‘a worst scale of humanitarian needs.’ Unfortunately, this year is not an exception to this trend. The number of people in need is soaring, the gap between the needs and the resources is ever-widening. We are now living in a world where about 1% of the whole population, 82 million people, is displaced. The vast majority of which, about 85%, are hosted by developing countries. Global challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change are affecting all of us but in a disproportionate manner. In the face of these challenges, the call for global solidarity has never been sobering than ever

before.

In this regard, Vice Chairperson, allow me to highlight five points that are particularly relevant under these circumstances.

First, we take note of protection challenges caused and/or exacerbated by the pandemic. In particular, many reports regarding cases of pushbacks at borders, which amount almost to a denial of the right to seek asylum, are of great concern.

This year, we celebrated the 70th anniversary of the 1951 Refugee Convention, of which the principle of non-refoulement is the cornerstone. In this regard, we appreciate UNHCR's endeavors to advocate these core values. At the same time, it is also important to provide assistance and share good practices to member states to help them be well-equipped with proper asylum capacity. Therefore, we commend UNHCR's efforts such as the Asylum Capacity Support Group (ACSG).

Second, as the drivers of the displacement are multiple and complex, our efforts to address it should be multi-faceted.

Therefore, enhancing coordination among humanitarian actors with different expertise is greatly important. We thus commend UNHCR on its various initiatives, including its partnership with

IOM in jointly responding to the rising trend of mixed flow; the Blueprint for Joint Action with UNICEF to further the inclusion of refugee children into national systems; and the Joint Strategy with WFP aimed at enhancing self-reliance in food security in protracted refugee situations. My delegation is interested in hearing preliminary lessons learned from the cooperations and encourages UNHCR to share that lesson with a wider humanitarian community.

Third, the efforts to secure protection should be paired with collective efforts to find durable solutions. It is encouraging to see a gradual resumption of programs for return and resettlement, and we thank UNHCR's facilitating role in this. Korea values the three regional support platforms, launched on the occasion of the 1st Global Refugee Forum (GRF), as mechanisms to further multi-stakeholder, solutions-oriented approaches. My government has been actively engaged in the SSAR (Solutions Strategy for Afghanistan Refugees) Support Platform as one of the core group members and will continue to explore the best ways to fulfill our commitment as the Afghanistan situation develops.

Fourth, it is all the more important to provide proper support to

host communities in the spirit of an equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing of the GCR (Global Compact on Refugees). To this end, my government has made pledges during the GRF a) to expand the total volume of aid to support displacement situations and b) to have more focus on the Triple (Humanitarian-Development-Peace) Nexus for greater resilience of both affected people and the host communities. We have been implementing those pledges despite the financial restraint caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of these efforts, my government adopted its first-ever national strategy on Triple Nexus, and currently exploring opportunities for pilot projects. One of the candidates is health and education projects in Bor (보르) Region, Jonglei (종글레이) State of South Sudan. In this regard, the side-event on the IGAD-UNHCR solutions initiative for South Sudan and Sudan was of particular interest. We encourage UNHCR to continue to share the progress.

Fifth, in implementing all these efforts and activities what I stressed, the international community heavily relies on the role of the humanitarian workers on the ground. Our resources cannot be translated into actual impact without the helping hands who are taking risks to deliver essential services. Therefore, there is no way we can overemphasize the importance of a) unhindered, unimpeded access granted for all humanitarian

workers, b) full respect of the IHL (International Humanitarian Law) by all parties concerned at all times, c) and protection of aid workers from any threats and attacks. Our government has been and will be a staunch advocate of this cause, along with other member states.

Vice Chairperson,

My delegation believes that human resources are the key asset of UNHCR in fulfilling its mandate. Therefore, the Republic of Korea reaffirms its support to UNHCR's efforts to provide a proper duty of care and enabling working environment for its staff.

Before closing, let me take this opportunity to reiterate our delegation's great interest in addressing the regional imbalance in UNHCR's workforce, where the Asia-Pacific region is one of the least represented, 14% of the total. Given the recently decentralized and regionalized structure of the UNHCR, it is all the more crucial to improving regional balance in its talents to provide more quality service based on balanced experiences and understanding of all regions they operate. We are looking forward to hearing continued efforts and progress on this issue. I thank you.

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