



European Union

**UNHCR Executive Committee 73rd Session
10-14 October 2022**

Agenda item 3: General debate

Statement by the European Union and its Member States

Madam/Mr Chair,

I am speaking on behalf of the European Union and its Member States. The Candidate Countries North Macedonia, Montenegro, Ukraine and Republic of Moldova, the potential candidate countries Bosnia and Herzegovina* and Georgia align themselves with this declaration.

1. Since our last meeting a year ago, forced displacement has reached yet another sad record level, with over 100 million forcibly displaced persons across the world. The EU and its Member States are deeply concerned that the pace of displacement continues to considerably outpace solutions for both refugees and internally displaced persons. With the challenging times we are now experiencing, we are very pleased that you, Mr Filippo Grandi, will continue to lead UNHCR for another 2.5 years. We commend your personal commitment and dedication to the refugee cause, and reassure you of our continued support in these efforts.

2. We reiterate our gratitude to governments and host communities who have taken in forcibly displaced persons. Most refugees worldwide seek safety in neighbouring countries or within the region of their home country, often receiving enormous solidarity from countries and communities who are experiencing many challenges themselves.

* North Macedonia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process

3. This year, Russia's unprovoked and unjustified invasion of Ukraine has triggered the worst displacement crisis in Europe since the Second World War. Over 6 million people are currently internally displaced in Ukraine and millions more have fled the country.

4. We are proud of the response and strong support by European countries and communities to help those fleeing Russia's war in Ukraine. Due to the rapid and large scale displacement, the EU and its Member States reacted immediately by activating, for the first time, the Temporary Protection Directive. So far, around 4 million people have registered for temporary protection in EU Member States. This gives them access to essential services, the labour market, suitable accommodation, social welfare assistance, medical care and education. We dedicate special attention to the protection of children and women, as well as to prevention of human trafficking, given the high level of vulnerability of those fleeing the war. The EU and its Member States are working closely with UNHCR and other international partners in this respect.

5. The EU and its Member States condemn in the strongest possible terms Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine – as well as the illegal annexations by Russia of Ukrainian regions in the East – all in blatant violation of international law, including the UN Charter, and the core principles on which the international rules-based order is built. By wilfully undermining the rules-based international order, and blatantly violating the fundamental rights of Ukraine to independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, Russia is putting global security at risk.

6. Beyond our borders, the EU and its Member States are deeply concerned over the global impact of Russia's war, particularly on already fragile countries, including those hosting a significant number of refugees and other persons of concern. The EU and its Member States have quickly mobilised and remain fully engaged to address and mitigate the global consequences of the war. In May, we committed to work with all global partners on an "EU Global Food Security Response". As part of this commitment, the EU has identified an overall contribution of over EUR 5 billion in humanitarian and development assistance for global food security (covering the period 2021-2024). This includes over EUR 2 billion to countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, and another EUR 1 billion for North Africa and the Middle East. Another EUR 960 million are foreseen for Latin America and the Caribbean and Asia until 2024. Overall, almost 20% of the EU's annual humanitarian aid budget is dedicated to emergency food assistance and nutrition.

7. Rest assured that we have not lost sight of humanitarian needs around the world, including in protracted displacement crises. The EU and its Member States are committed to do their part to contribute to greater burden- and responsibility sharing for refugees globally, as well as addressing the root causes of forced displacement. Together with its Member States, the EU continues to be a leading donor to support responses to major refugee crisis, bringing together humanitarian and development efforts in line with the EU policy on forced displacement.

8. The right to seek and access asylum and the principle of non-refoulement remain at the heart of European law, policy and action. Last year, over 500 000 asylum seekers applied for international protection in the EU. Together with its Member States, the EU remains committed to supporting responses to major refugee crisis around the world and continues to be a leading donor, bringing together humanitarian and development efforts in line with the EU policy on forced displacement. We also remain committed to providing safe and legal pathways to protection in the EU. Since 2015, EU-supported resettlement programmes have been in place and have helped more than 100 000 refugees find shelter in the EU.

9. Access to health care for forcibly displaced and stateless persons remains a significant challenge in many parts of the world, especially when it comes to mental health care. The EU and its Member States therefore believe that it is very relevant that this year's Executive Committee conclusion focus on mental health and psychosocial support. We express our appreciation for the excellent work of the Rapporteur and welcome the adoption of these conclusions by consensus at the end of our meeting this week.

10. The first Global Refugee Forum in Geneva three years ago, was an important milestone in bringing together a wider group of stakeholders dedicated to the refugee cause, including more proactive engagement with development actors and international financial institutions. To meet the growing challenges of forced displacement, this new form of partnerships is necessary. We therefore welcome that this year's High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection is dedicated to the topic of development cooperation, and look forward to contribute with our experiences, as donors and refugee hosting countries, to generate important new recommendations, concrete

policy suggestions and best practices in this area, including how to further strengthen the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.

11. The High Commissioner's Dialogue this year will also be an important step toward the next Global Refugee Forum in 2023, to which the EU and its Member States look forward to actively engage and contribute according to national policies. We encourage UNHCR to work with stakeholders to keep the pledging process efficient, simple and transparent, building on the work and progress made in the past years, and ultimately to strengthen global solidarity and burden and responsibility sharing. We support the participation of refugees and refugee-led organisations in such global events.

12. Considering the global challenges to respond and meet the needs of forcibly displaced populations, we appreciate that UNHCR has continued to carry on with its internal reforms efforts, especially the business transformation programme. We commend its efforts to strengthen strategic planning, integrity and oversight functions, risk management and programming based on results. We encourage UNHCR to strongly continue these efforts and provide regular updates on progress as well as challenges. We welcome and share UNHCR's commitment to combatting racism, intolerance and discrimination, as well as sexual and gender-based violence against displaced and stateless populations. With a view to rapidly growing humanitarian needs, we also acknowledge UNHCR's work to broaden its donor base and encourage further efforts to this end.

Madam/Mr Chair,

13. Let me conclude by again expressing our appreciation for the important work carried out by UNHCR and its staff, in the current challenging circumstances as forced displacement continues to rise. The EU and its Member States remain strong supporters of your work and mandate – politically as well as financially – and you can continue to count on our solid partnership.

Thank you.