

**Statement delivered by Ms. Anneli Vares
Deputy Permanent Representative
of the Republic of Estonia**

**UNHCR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
69th Session
(1 – 5 October 2018)
General Debate – Item 3**

Thank you Mr Chair, HC, Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Estonia fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union and would like to add some additional remarks in its national capacity.

First, we would like to commend the High Commissioner for his leadership in the inclusive and transparent process that brought us to the agreement on the Global Compact on Refugees. Estonia was actively involved in the consultations and strongly supports the outcome. We are now looking forward to its endorsement and are ready for the subsequent implementation. Estonia has been a stable contributor to the UNHCR and continues to hold to its commitments.

We welcome the deepening of the comprehensive, multistakeholder approach on the refugee situations that implies also better cooperation and coordination between development and humanitarian actors. We support the UNHCR's approach to strengthen the collaboration with the host countries, especially focusing on the urbanized areas where most of the refugees as well as IDPs find shelter. Paying equal attention to the refugee and host communities, their wellbeing and protection, involving all stakeholders in that process, contributes to the prevention of further aggravation of situations. Engaging further with the private sector and civil society at all levels would enable to develop longer-term, durable solutions.

Estonia, as a small country, strongly believes in coordination and burden-sharing. Therefore we support UNHCR's efforts to better coordinate its activities with other international partners. Further improvement of coordination between humanitarian actors themselves is of utmost importance in order to guarantee more efficient and operative response to the refugee crises. In this context, Estonia commends particularly the steps taken by the UNHCR and the IOM to overcome that gap. We also commend and support the evolving partnerships with global economic organizations, such as OECD and the World Bank, with the aim to better tackling the root causes of forced displacement. I would hereby take the opportunity to extend our appreciation to Mdm Kristalina Georgieva for her very inspiring statement.

Mr Chair,

We remain deeply concerned about the refugee situation in many parts of the world. As the High Commissioner mentioned, most of them have continued to evolve and new crises have emerged, which underlines the continued need for protection and unrestricted humanitarian access. On this note, allow me to also point out the humanitarian situation in Ukraine, to which Estonia draws particular attention. The serious situation in Ukraine should be kept in our sight as the number of the displaced persons and their suffering continues to be a cause for great concern.

According to the High Commissioners report in 2017 half of the refugee population were children. Estonia considers extremely important to pay more attention to the most vulnerable part of displaced persons, the women, but especially children. We would like to highlight the education of the refugee and internally displaced children as one of the key elements for durable solutions. Avoiding “lost generations” is an important contribution in the wider peace and security context. Estonia, for example, is providing IT-training for the Za’atar and Azraq refugee camp children in Jordan and for the Duhok refugee camp children in Iraq.

The open but also protracted conflicts continue to be the main cause of forced displacement. Thereby prevention of conflicts should be the first and foremost aim of the international community. In order to contribute to the maintenance of the peace and security in the world and so prevent large refugee situations, Estonia has introduced its candidacy for the UN Security Council non-permanent seat for the period of 2020-21.

Mr Chair,

Estonia highly appreciates the UNHCR’s work around the globe and the support to the States and other relevant actors in building their protection capacity. UNHCR has been an excellent partner for us in setting up our own practices of resettlement and relocation. Since 2015 Estonia is participating in such activities. We have already relocated 147 and resettled 59 persons and preparing to resettle 80 persons more by the end of 2019.

We welcome UNHCR’s efforts to reduce costs and measure the efficiency gain with technology and innovation. The advantage of new technologies and innovative solutions should be assessed and put in practice where possible in order to deal with refugee situations more effectively.

In conclusion, Estonia values highly the work of UNHCR’s dedicated staff, notably in the field and appreciates UNHCR’s efforts to reform, including further regionalisation. We are looking forward to working with you and all other partners on implementing the Global Compact on Refugees.

Thank you!