

**United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
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**General Debate
STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF ICELAND**

**H.E. Mr. Harald Aspelund
Permanent Representative of Iceland to the United Nations, Geneva**

Mr. Chairman, Mr. High Commissioner, Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen

Let me begin by thanking the High Commissioner for his opening statement.

It is evident that displacement continues to be one of the defining global challenges of our time. The scale of this crisis requires both immediate responses and durable solutions.

We commend UNHCR for its dedicated work in often difficult and dangerous environments; providing protection and assistance in several complex refugee situations, both new and protracted ones.

Mr. Chairman

We must ensure that displaced people enjoy basic human rights and dignity and that vulnerable and disadvantaged groups are not left behind.

Women and girls are disproportionately affected in forced displacement situations. Sexual and gender based violence continues to be widespread and limited access to sexual and reproductive health services is a concern. While much has been achieved in the last few years, we can still do more and better in responding to the critical needs of women and girls in conflict and refugee situations. We therefore encourage UNHCR to continue to prioritize gender equality in its work.

In this context, Iceland welcomes UNHCR's new strategy and action plan to eradicate sexual exploitation and abuse. Translating the strategy into action requires strong leadership

and we are pleased to see the commitment of senior management in this regard.

As we confront massive levels of forced displacement in all regions of the world, it is our hope that the Global Compact on Refugees will be able to deliver on a more comprehensive, predictable and solutions-oriented response. The Global Compact is our opportunity to transform the response to refugee situations globally. While broad international solidarity, as outlined in the compact, remains essential, emphasis must now turn to implementation.

Mr. Chairman

I assure you that Iceland will continue to do its part. Over the past few years, Iceland has significantly increased its support and strengthened its partnership with UNHCR. We are currently in the process of renewing the Strategy for Iceland's

international development cooperation for the period of 2019-2023, where humanitarian aid is an integral element. I am pleased to inform you that UNHCR will feature prominently in the new strategy, as one of Iceland's priority organizations in the humanitarian field. And, in line with our commitments from the World Humanitarian Summit, the draft strategy includes commitments to provide flexible and predictable funding, to strengthen the humanitarian-development nexus and enhance local and national capacity.

At the same time, domestically, Iceland has invested heavily to respond to the large-scale influx of refugees and migrants. This year Iceland has resettled 52 refugees, mainly from Iraq and Syria, but also a number of LGBT refugees from Uganda. In addition, more than 100 individuals have been granted protection this year after applying for asylum in Iceland as well as under the family reunification principle. These might

not seem to be large numbers, but in our context with our extremely small population, they certainly are.

Finally, Mr. Chairman

In line with our increasing support, I want to convey to you the interest of my Government of becoming a full member of UNHCRs Executive Committee. We hope to be able to contribute constructively in discussions within the committee and look forward to continue our good collaboration going forward.

To conclude, let me reaffirm that Iceland will remain engaged and stands behind UNHCR as the key agency in ensuring the protection of displaced people, now and in the future.

I thank you.