

**Global Forum on Refugees
Plenary Meeting, 17-18 December 2019**

Statement by Sri Lanka

Mr. Chair,

It gives me great pleasure to join the Global Refugee Forum and assure the fullest cooperation of the Government of Sri Lanka for the commendable work carried out by the UNHCR, specially its effective coordinating role and follow up work pertaining to the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) adopted by the UN last year.

The Global Refugee Forum, the first to follow the adoption of the GCR, is an important platform which is inclusive and open. Its nature, design and scope are reflective of the priorities of the UN Development Agenda 2030, and of the diversity of stakes and strategies in addressing multifarious challenges in refugee situations as well as in situations of internal displacement and statelessness. We consider it more than a platform for exchange of views, perspectives, and the lessons learnt. In fact, it represents a creative enterprise that could make multilateralism, combined with humanity, deliver on the needs of the vulnerable in a timely and meaningful manner.

There are numerous challenges affecting the unfortunate people who have been, and are still being, as we address this Forum today, rendered vulnerable due to a multiplicity of factors beyond their control. The conditions they are subjected to, often tantamount to abnegating the very norms of protection, assistance and assurance of durable solutions which the international community is called upon to uphold. In reality,

they even signify the erosion of empathy and equity needed to ensure that they are not behind in the effective pursuit of SDGs.

Mr. Chair,

Today, as we discuss the need for sharing of burden and responsibilities - a key component of the GCR, let us salute the efforts of and pledge to enhance our support to fellow nations who, despite immense pressures on their national budgets and resources, continue to receive and host large numbers of people from neighbouring countries and beyond fleeing situations of mass displacement.

Sri Lanka, despite not being a signatory to the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees or its 1967 Protocol, has hosted asylum seekers and refugees for several decades, recognizing as well, the universal principle of non-refoulement. Regular technical level meetings between UNHCR and government agencies have enabled the sharing of information and improvement of coordination and communications over the years. This coordination was particularly useful in the aftermath of the tragic events of Easter Sunday this year.

Mr. Chair,

The increase in the number refugees in recent years due to internal and international conflicts is a serious concern. These challenges demand our collective commitment and cooperation to address. We also take this opportunity to thank donors and partners who have made generous contributions over the years towards the UNHCR, and we encourage

them as well as others able to do so, to keep on supporting UNHCR's work in the field, through enhanced resources.

We wish the UNHCR and the High Commissioner all success in their commendable endeavours and assure them of Sri Lanka's fullest cooperation in dealing with the numerous challenges ahead.

Thank you.