

**UNHCR**United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés

**UNHCR Contribution to the
OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
Working Session 9:
“Humanitarian Issues and Other Commitments”
Warsaw, 20 September 2019**

Distinguished Chairperson,
Dear Participants,

UNHCR has the sad duty to inform you that the trends of ever-increasing displacement reported in previous years continue. This, unfortunately, is a worrying indicator of the present state of our world. It also reflects failures in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, as well as the shortcomings in the protection of human rights. During the past years, new and unresolved conflicts were the main cause of mass displacement, and they led to an unprecedented number of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs).

Displacement has become one of the biggest challenges of our times. Globally, **70.8 million people** were displaced by end-2018 as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, and human rights violations, reaching once more the highest number since the post-World War II era¹. The situation in the OSCE area mirrors these challenges. By the end of 2018, there were about **12.4 million persons** of concern to UNHCR within the OSCE area. These include 6.9 million refugees, 2.7 million IDPs, 2 million asylum-seekers and 635,000 stateless persons². Within the OSCE area, the unresolved conflicts in Ukraine and the South Caucasus remain of key concern, as well as the many casualties of refugees and migrants crossing the Mediterranean Sea to reach safer shores in Europe.

The dimension of these challenges requires international cooperation in a spirit of solidarity. It also entails working towards fair and more predictable responsibility- and burden-sharing, as outlined in the **Global Compact on Refugees**³. In line with this, we would like to draw your attention to the first ministerial-level **Global Refugee Forum – Solidarity in Action**⁴ (Geneva, 17-

¹ UNHCR Global Trends 2018, <https://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends2018/>

² UNHCR Factsheet Liaison Office Vienna, https://www.unhcr.org/dach/wp-content/uploads/sites/27/2019/06/LOV_Factsheet_June-2019.pdf

³ Global Compact on Refugees, <https://www.unhcr.org/the-global-compact-on-refugees.html>

⁴ Global Refugee Forum – Solidarity in Action, <https://www.unhcr.org/global-refugee-forum.html>

18 December 2019), which will offer stakeholders the opportunity to translate principles into concrete commitments and actions.⁵

The policy framework offered by the Global Compact will also inform the further development of UNHCR-OSCE cooperation. Ongoing cooperation entails the following areas:

Firstly, **collaboration in early warning, conflict prevention and resolution**, with particular attention given to upholding the rights of displaced persons and affected communities along the conflict cycle.⁶ In this context, UNHCR works closely with the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre, the OSCE Minsk Group, assumes the role as one of the Co-Moderators of Working Group II of the Geneva International Discussions, and is in close contact with the SMM on the ground.

Secondly, **promotion of tolerance and non-discrimination**: this includes efforts aiming at reporting and combating hate speech and crimes against migrants and refugees in close cooperation with ODIHR;

Thirdly, (and) more recently, joint efforts have been initiated to assist States, and in particular local municipalities, to **create more receptive environments facilitating the integration of migrants and refugees**;

Fourthly, since 2016, UNHCR has joined forces with ODIHR and HCNM serving the **prevention and reduction of statelessness** in the framework of the global #IBELONG Campaign⁷. In this context, particular attention has been given to national minorities such as Roma and Sinti. We are pleased that the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities will be one of the high-level panelists at the global **High-Level Segment on Statelessness**⁸ to mark the mid-point of the #IBelong Campaign, which will take place in Geneva on 7 October 2019.

Causes of displacement today are complex, with new challenges developing dynamically. Climate change has been recognized as new driver of displacement, requiring increased attention⁹. It can contribute to conflicts that cause displacement, and can exacerbate existing displacement situations¹⁰. UNHCR, therefore, welcomed the OSCE Security Days expert roundtable on

⁵ One year after the historic affirmation of the Global Compact on Refugees, this Forum is a critical opportunity to build momentum towards achieving the objectives of this new commitment and strengthen our collective response to refugee situations.

⁶ OSCE-UNHCR Protection Checklist: Addressing Displacement and Protection of Displaced Populations and Affected Communities along the Conflict Cycle: a Collaborative Approach (2014), <https://www.refworld.org/docid/530b060d4.html>

⁷ OSCE-UNHCR Handbook on Statelessness in the OSCE Area: International Standards and Good Practices (2017), <https://www.refworld.org/docid/58b81c404.html>

⁸ High Level Segment, <https://www.unhcr.org/ibelong/high-level-segment-statelessness/>

⁹ According to the 2019 Global Report of the International Displacement Monitoring Centre, 17.2 million people have been newly internally displaced in relation to disasters in 2018. See 2019 Global Report on International Displacement, IDMC, <http://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2019/>

¹⁰ Volker Türk, "A Minor Miracle: A New Global Compact on Refugees", Launch Address, Grand Challenge on Refugees & Migrants, UNSW Sydney, 18 November 2016

“The OSCE and the Sustainable Development Goals”¹¹, which i.a. highlighted the urgency of addressing climate change with regard to conflict prevention and displacement.

UNHCR would be pleased if dialogue with and within the OSCE could be expanded to further assess the inextricable linkages between climate related disasters, conflict and forced displacement and develop response strategies. We acknowledge the complementary role that the OSCE can play in enhancing cooperation on issues related to climate and security.

UNHCR stands ready to continue supporting the Slovak OSCE Chairmanship until end-2019 as well as the incoming Albanian Chairmanship in 2020 on all issues related to forced displacement and statelessness.

*UNHCR Liaison Office to the OSCE
and Vienna-based UN Agencies
Vienna, September 2019*

¹¹ OSCE Security Days: The OSCE and the Sustainable Development Goals, Vienna, 4 June 2019