



United States Mission to the OSCE

World Refugee Day

As delivered by Chief Arms Control Delegate Daniel Wartko
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
June 22, 2023

Mr. Chair, war, conflict, and environmental catastrophes force millions around the world to seek shelter and safety outside of their countries. We pay tribute to the incredible strength and resilience of refugees around the world, who often risk their lives on perilous journeys in search of safety. We are greatly saddened by the tragic June 15 shipwreck off the coast of Greece in which hundreds died or are missing. We also honor the communities that generously host refugees, such as those in Türkiye, which hosts over four million refugees.

Two days ago, on June 20, the international community came together to mark the 22nd anniversary of World Refugee Day. As we reflect on this year's World Refugee Day theme—“hope away from home” – I want to commend all those countries that have responded to Russia's war of aggression and the resulting humanitarian crisis by opening their borders. The generous assistance and compassion they have shown to the more than six million refugees from Ukraine fleeing Russia's brutality has been extraordinary, as is the support to the countless other vulnerable people fleeing persecution.

The OSCE has a unique mandate to support displaced persons through its field operations, independent institutions, and relationships with the Mediterranean and Asian Partners for Cooperation. The Organization also plays a critical role supporting international efforts addressing the migration phenomenon due to its highly regarded expertise in protecting, defending, and monitoring human rights across the OSCE region. In partnership with UNHCR, the OSCE has considerable experience in facilitating the return and reintegration of refugees and internally displaced persons, from Tajikistan's civil war in the early 1990s to more recently in the Western Balkans. Last week in North Macedonia, our Mission met with incoming Director General of the International Organization for Migration Amy Pope, to discuss enhancing cooperation between the IOM and the OSCE across a number of areas.

In closing, we call on all participating States to honor this year's World Refugee Day theme by supporting refugees in restarting their lives, including them in the life of the communities that have offered them safety from persecution, allowing them to work and access education, and enabling them to contribute to their host countries while they await that day when they can finally return home.

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