



## United States Mission to the OSCE

### Session 17 The Rights of Migrants II Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons

As prepared for delivery U.S. Head of Delegation J. Brian Atwood  
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The United States remains deeply concerned with the plight of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) within the OSCE region. The ongoing crisis in **Ukraine** and protracted conflicts in **Moldova, Georgia**, and Nagorno-Karabakh continue to demonstrate the importance of OSCE engagement to serve those displaced by conflict and other challenges. While the United Nations, through the work of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), retains a leading role to meet this need, the status of displaced populations remains a central security issue requiring collaboration with the OSCE and local actors.

We applaud the efforts to integrate further awareness of and effective response to the needs of refugees and IDPs through the release of the “Protection Checklist: Addressing Displacement and Protection of Displaced Populations and Affected Communities along the Conflict Cycle” in February. This collaborative effort between the OSCE’s Conflict Prevention Center and UNHCR has been successfully deployed throughout OSCE field operations and improved identification of individuals in need. We welcome further translation and dissemination of this document to improve the effectiveness of support for displaced populations.

The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine has used the checklist to address the needs of the more than 275,000 IDPs (as of September 18) who have fled from Crimea and eastern **Ukraine**. Military operations have resulted in significant internal displacement of local populations, while others have left for the **Russian Federation, Belarus**, and other neighboring countries. It is important to note the growing number of IDPs – nearly 20,000 – who have fled from Russia-occupied Crimea to other parts of Ukraine. We discourage participating States from politicizing the status of refugees and IDPs to foment further conflict toward political goals in this crisis and other conflicts.

The United States remains committed to the achievement of a long-term political solution to the conflict in **Georgia**. We will not achieve concrete progress to this end without free and unhindered humanitarian access to the Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions of Georgia, particularly to serve the needs of IDPs.

The conflict in **Syria** and the rise of Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in Iraq, Syria, and the region have also increasingly had an impact on OSCE participating States and our Mediterranean Partners. In **Turkey**, there are over 1.35 million Syrian refugees, as well as an estimated 200,000 Iraqi refugees. The urban refugees in the southern Turkish city of Gaziantep alone exceed 220,000. Despite integration efforts, the large volume of people

displaced from the conflict has resulted in a weakened regional security environment. Violent incidents have also occurred in urban areas as a result of rising tensions between local populations and the refugee influx. We commend the government of Turkey for its substantial investment in infrastructure and services to accommodate refugees from Syria and the government of **Jordan** for its willingness to host over 600,000 refugees from Syria. We urge increased international support for humanitarian efforts, which have become more acute due to the violent escalation by ISIL.

In the Balkans, OSCE continues to play a strong role in supporting the Regional Housing Program, a multi-donor trust fund that is helping up to 74,000 of the most vulnerable refugees and displaced persons in **Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Croatia** with housing support. The beneficiaries have waited since the breakup of Yugoslavia to find a durable solution to their housing needs. The OSCE, in tight coordination with UNHCR, has played a key role in ensuring that that the program is fair, efficiently run, and adhering to international norms on protection.