



Delegation of Canada  
to the OSCE

Délégation du Canada  
auprès de l'OSCE

**JOINT STATEMENT DELIVERED BY AMBASSADOR JOCELYN KINNEAR  
ON WORLD REFUGEE DAY  
1429<sup>th</sup> SPECIAL MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

**22 June 2023**

Mr. Chair,

I am delivering this statement on behalf of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and Canada.

We would like to thank Türkiye for raising this critical issue. On June 20, our countries joined others in highlighting the plight of those who have been forced to flee their homes, which the UNHCR estimates is currently over 110 million people. The figure has more than doubled over the past decade. Escaping conflict and persecution requires strength, courage, and resilience. We recognize the profound hardships they have endured and reaffirm our commitment to protect and support them.

On this year's World Refugee Day, OSCE participating States face an unprecedented emergency. According to the UNHCR, more than 8 million individual refugees from Ukraine have been recorded across Europe since Russia's invasion on 24th of February 2022. This represents the largest cross-border movement in Europe since the Second World War. In addition, 5 million more Ukrainians are estimated to be internally displaced. These people forced from their homes by Russia's illegal war of aggression add to those already fleeing conflict and persecution to the OSCE region from Afghanistan, Syria, and others. In this regard, Türkiye and the Turkish people also continue to play a generous role hosting and integrating refugees into their communities.

In the context of Russia's military aggression against Ukraine and the related humanitarian crisis, we commend host countries for opening their borders, for showing empathy and care, and for their efforts to grant Ukrainian refugees the opportunity to study, work, and live decent lives in safety. We would like to highlight, in particular, the efforts of Poland and Germany, who have each taken in upwards of 900,000 Ukrainian refugees, and Moldova, who is making significant sacrifices to support Ukraine in myriad ways, including sheltering those seeking safety there. Close coordination and cooperation between host and transit countries improves the safe movement and ease of those fleeing violence. We would also like to thank the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and the Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings for their important work in assisting Ukrainians fleeing the gravest impacts of Russia's war.

This year's slogan, "Hope away from home", reinforces the importance of inclusion, and ensuring that all people, including refugees from diverse backgrounds, have equitable and appropriate access to the spaces they need to be safe and to thrive. We underscore the importance of inclusion and diversity, and of the positive impact that newcomers can have on our societies and economies. In many parts of our countries, refugees are integral to the fabric of our communities; they start businesses, volunteer, and contribute to our economies, and we are collectively better for it.

When addressing the situation of refugees, we must continue to place emphasis on reaching those most in need, including women and girls, and to put forward concrete and timely initiatives to promote human rights, gender equality, dignity, meaningful participation, and peace and security. It is also paramount that we tackle discrimination wherever it occurs to ensure refugees can thrive and contribute to their new communities.

The OSCE as a regional security organization recognizes the impact that refugees and other forcibly displaced persons have on our comprehensive security. It is incumbent on us, as participating States, to collectively provide international protection and assistance to refugees, and find durable and dignified solutions for them and for other forcibly displaced persons.

Thank you.