

UK statement for the 73rd session of the UNHCR Executive Committee

Thank you very much, most distinguished Madame Chair, and High Commissioner.

This year, we come together here in the face of a myriad of challenges. Armed conflict; violence; persecution; climate change; economic uncertainty; and food insecurity – all of them on the rise.

The figures are well-known and they've been well-rehearsed here in this hall over the last couple of days. But they don't lose their power to shock. Over 300 million people in need of humanitarian assistance. More than 100 million forcibly displaced.

The humanitarian system alone cannot respond to those 300 million people in need. Coming together in this Executive Committee – striving to do better, and to reach as many in need as possible – is critical.

And, High Commissioner, as others have said, as ever, we remain deeply inspired by and grateful to all UNHCR staff and their partners for their tremendous efforts, striving to assist millions in the toughest and often the most dangerous situations. And despite the risks that you and your staff take on, and the personal sacrifices that so many of you make, UNHCR's dedication is steadfast. For this, and for so much more, we applaud you.

Let me also recognize and commend the enormous generosity of host nations and communities who welcome and support those who are forced to flee their homes, as former German Chancellor Angela Merkel did so eloquently at the Nansen Awards last night.

High Commissioner, this is a critical moment for tens of millions of vulnerable people across the globe.

The COVID pandemic, climate change, and conflict have created the worst food security crisis in more than a generation. And we need to do more work, right now, to break the cycle of famine.

And let me take a moment, Chair, to echo others' horror and incredulity in the face of President Putin's latest atrocities in Ukraine: strikes on civilian targets that have no other purpose than trying to spread terror. This, after an aggression that has already displaced almost 14 million people and left almost 18 million in need of humanitarian assistance and which has worsened food insecurity across the planet.

All this – at a time when globally, humanitarian need has never been greater.

For our part in the UK, we are taking life-saving action. This year, we plan to provide more than £150 million to East Africa, including to meet urgent needs in Somalia. And we pledged over £50m to the UN Central Emergency Response Fund at the G7 Summit.

Our new International Development Strategy sets out our long-standing commitment to life-saving humanitarian work. We intend to contribute £3 billion to humanitarian needs, globally, over the next three years.

And our Humanitarian Framework delivers on the ambition laid out in that strategy in three ways: prioritising humanitarian assistance to people in greatest need; protecting the people most at risk in conflict and crises; and preventing and anticipating future shocks and building resilience.

As a nation, and as a Government, we are strongly committed to supporting refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons, and all those people across the world who are forcibly displaced from their homes – as well as the countries who so generously host them. We continue to provide significant levels of multi-year, unearmarked funding to UNHCR, and our total funding in 2022 stands at over \$100m.

High Commissioner, we commend UNHCR's progress in driving reform to become a more effective and more efficient organisation. We have seen already welcome changes, including decentralisation and the introduction of COMPASS for multi-year planning, budgeting and monitoring. We look forward to partnering with you to ensure that these changes continue to drive improvement.

We also recognise your efforts to expand the donor base, and welcome the significant increase in contributions from the private sector this year. It's critical that UNHCR seizes the opportunity to build on these new partnerships to ensure they are both sustainable and strategic, and that can offer long-term support to your mandate.

Last, but far from least: after a successful High-level Official Meeting at the end of 2021, we now look forward to the second Global Refugee Forum in late 2023. This will be an important milestone for all those concerned with the plight of refugees and the forcibly displaced, and we will work alongside you and other Member States to deliver a Forum which ensures the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees to find practical, long-term solutions for refugees, internally displaced, asylum seekers, the stateless – and their host communities.

Thank you very much.