

World Refugee Day 2022: joint statement to the OSCE

Mr. Chair,

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

On June 20, our countries joined the international community in recognizing all those who have been forced to flee their homelands, which the UNHCR is projecting at over 100 million in 2022. Escaping conflict and persecution requires strength, courage, and resilience. We acknowledge the profound hardships they have endured and reaffirm our commitment to protect and support them.

This year's recognition of World Refugee Day comes at a time where the OSCE participating States face an unprecedented emergency. According to the UNHCR, more than 4.8 million individual refugees from Ukraine have been recorded across Europe since Russia's invasion on 24 February. This represents the largest cross-border movement in Europe since the Second World War. In addition, more than 7.1 million people are estimated to be internally displaced in Ukraine. This emergency created by Russia's actions adds to the people already fleeing conflict and persecution to the OSCE region from Afghanistan, Syria, and other countries. This year's World Refugee Day slogan is "Whoever, Wherever, Whenever. Everyone has a right to seek safety." Since 24 February we have heard first-person accounts in our Human Dimension Committee and in Supplementary Human Dimension meetings about the immense losses, uncertainty, barriers, risks and trauma that refugees and forcibly displaced people face in that search for a safe place and a new home. In the Security Committee, we have heard about the distress and vulnerability of those crossing the borders in search of refuge, and we have heard about the increased risks of trafficking faced by refugees, particularly women and children. We praise the receiving countries for opening their borders, for showing empathy and care, and for their efforts to protect these individuals as they face this terrible hardship.

This 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 in our societies. 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.

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 other forcibly displaced persons.

Thank you.