



STATEMENT

By

Delegation of Georgia

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check against delivery

Mr. Chairman,

Mr. High Commissioner,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is an honor to address this distinguished audience and share my country's experience related to the integration and protection of asylum-seekers, refugees and humanitarian status holders.

In order to protect them and ensure their secure stay in the country, Georgian legislation and institutional framework was further strengthened. Georgia is committed to uphold the institution of asylum by reinforcing and implementing laws and policy frameworks for the protection of refugees. For Example we have adopted a joint order with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which guarantees non-refoulement and enshrines fair border crossing procedures.

Integration of asylum-seekers, refugees and humanitarian status holders is an imperative for my government. They are provided with access to universal healthcare governmental program and enjoy education and labor rights as Georgian citizens.

From the year 2016, our beneficiaries have access to free legal assistance and representation in court. They also receive a monthly allowance.

Georgia is on its way to adopt a new law of Georgia “On International Protection” that is in line with 1951 UN Convention. The new draft Law was approved by the parliament of Georgia by two hearings and the final hearing will be scheduled after Georgian elections in October.

The Law provides persons in need of international protection with more favorable conditions and strengthens procedural safeguards at all stages of the asylum procedure. The Law specifies general principles and their rights and freedoms. Moreover, it establishes temporary protection and special procedures for persons with specific needs.

In drafting a new Law, UNHCR has provided notable assistance and we would like to thank you for your support.

Georgia has received up to 4,000 asylum-seekers over the past three years, out of whom, 706 entered the country this year. However, it should be noted that Georgia has its own difficulties with regards to displacement. Our citizens had been forcefully displaced from their homes by armed conflicts in 1990s and the Russian-Georgian war of 2008, followed by the occupation of more than twenty percent of Georgia’s sovereign territory. The number of registered IDPs is more than 270,000 and to this day they live in protracted displacement. Notably, their majority wishes to return to their homes, which is their fundamental and indivisible right.

Until their return, IDPs have the right to live in dignity and my government is driven to do everything in its capacity to ensure this right. One of our priorities is to provide IDPs with Durable Solutions. We continue to invest the efforts and resources in multiple accommodation programs. However, these scale of housing needs is higher;

only about 100,000 IDPs (34,534 families) had received durable solutions from the Ministry.

Even though, provision of housing remains a main challenge for the government, gradually more emphasis will be placed on supporting integration and self-realization of IDPs. Therefore we have adopted the Livelihood Strategy and respective Action Plan, which envisages inclusion of IDPs in different state programs.

Recently, we have launched livelihood initiatives support program, which will provide IDPs with cost-shared grants for self-employment.

Ministry has a strong interest to further implement livelihood programs, which is impossible with the limited budget of our country. Therefore, the support of international donors is of an utmost significance.

More importantly, the support of the international community in terms of the right of IDPs to return to their places of origin is crucial for Georgia. In this regard we are grateful for the UNHCR's active involvement in Geneva International Discussions and all the support we had received from the UNHCR Regional Office.

I hope we will continue our fruitful cooperation based on the best interests of IDPs, refugees and asylum seekers.

Once again, please allow me to express my sincerest gratitude to the Office of the High Commissioner and personally to Mr. Grandi and wish success in all future endeavors.

Thank You