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General debate

**Statement of the Republic of Slovenia
delivered by H.E. Mr. Vojislav Šuc,
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Slovenia**

Mr Chairman,

Allow me to thank the High Commissioner for his opening remarks and the overview of the current challenges as well as the operating environment of the Office of the UNHCR. Slovenia aligns itself with the statement delivered by the EU and would like to use this opportunity to briefly highlight some of the challenges and national endeavours.

It is hard to believe that today we face a human tragedy of the scale that mankind has not seen since World War II. Every day we witness the loss of lives of people looking for protection and dignity for themselves and for their families. UNHCR's role in protecting and assisting refugees has been crucial and we wish to commend the High Commissioner for his dedication and personal commitment in managing the complex situation of forced displacements.

Europe and its neighbourhood are confronted with an immense challenge. As a transit country, Slovenia has faced an unprecedented flow of refugees as a result of the conflict areas in the Middle East and in Africa. From mid-October 2015 to the beginning of March this year, more than 477,000 people transited our country which is equivalent to about a quarter of the entire Slovenian population. Slovenia provided care in a responsible and efficient way, while fully respecting humanitarian principles. Special attention was devoted to most vulnerable. Close collaboration with partners within and outside the European Union and with international organizations, including

UNHCR, was and continues to be of special importance. I pass the gratitude of Slovenian Government in this regard.

Mr Chairman,

the international community has proven its solidarity with people in need, but our current efforts are not enough. Slovenia welcomes the adoption of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants as an important step in enhancing these efforts. We reaffirm that comprehensive refugee response must be based on the principles of international cooperation and on burden- and responsibility-sharing. In this context, we wish to express our sincere appreciation to the countries who have welcomed large numbers of refugees, recognizing that this constitutes a considerable burden on their resources.

The most effective way to address the crisis is to create viable solutions to its root causes and push factors. For this reason, Slovenia proactively promotes the international humanitarian law and respect for human rights. Additionally, more has to be done on prevention and peaceful resolution of conflicts, greater coordination of humanitarian, development and peacebuilding efforts, and the promotion of the rule of law at the national and international levels. Attention must be given to addressing movements caused by poverty, instability, marginalization, exclusion and the lack of development and economic opportunities.

Our efforts are also devoted in fight against racism, xenophobia and extremism. Human rights education is an effective tool in this regard. In this context, Slovenia developed education material on the rights of child refugees, which was already introduced to 40.000 children to support the awareness-raising activities. Several training programmes and activities aiming at better supporting the inclusion of asylum seekers into the educational system are also under way.

Slovenia actively participates in the EU relocation scheme and has so far relocated 13% of the assigned quota. We also remain committed to share the burden in the efforts to fight human smuggling and trafficking and to prevent further loss of lives at sea. Slovenia participated in the operation EUNAVFOR MED with the patrol boat Triglav and we intend to engage again. We currently participate with the personnel.

Slovenia has also significantly increased humanitarian assistance for refugees in the past years. Since the beginning of the Syrian crisis more than EUR 1.8 million has been allocated. Funds have increased for more than six-times compared to 2014. Special attention is devoted to women and children.

Despite many humanitarian challenges, this year also brought opportunities for us to do better. World Humanitarian Summit in May as well as the UN high-level meeting on large movements of refugees and migrants and the Leader's Summit on refugees in September have proved to us, that there is a global will to establish an efficient response to the challenges. We intend to actively participate in the follow-up process. We look forward to hearing more about UNHCR's first steps regarding development of a comprehensive refugee response framework.

Finally, Mr Chairman,

Slovenia remains a regular supporter of UNHCR's humanitarian action and has managed to double our contributions to humanitarian appeals in comparison to the previous years. Our support was dedicated to internally displaced people and refugees in various humanitarian crises, including Syria, South Sudan, South East Europe and Iraq. We will continue to support the UNHCR's programmes also in the future and welcome five core priorities of the UNHCR's future strategic focus.

Thank you.