

# **GOVERNMENT OF CANADA INTERVENTION TO THE 68<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE UNHCR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

## **GENERAL STATEMENT**

Madame Chair, High-Commissioner,

On behalf of the Canadian delegation, I would like to thank the High Commissioner for his opening remarks and for his strong leadership over the last year. We commend the Agency, its staff, and its partners for their tireless efforts to respond to urgent needs and to seek protection and solutions for refugees. As we witness the increasing politicization of refugee issues, the role of the Agency to safeguard the Convention and to remind us all of our commitments to refugees is vital.

We need to continue working hard to translate the commitments made in last year's New York Declaration into meaningful change for refugees and host communities, including women and girls. Even though women and girls represent more than 50% of the world's refugee population, we know that in many contexts, refugee women and girls have fewer opportunities, fewer resources, and less power and security than men and boys. We must do more to address these imbalances, not only as a human rights imperative, but also because this will yield true developmental gains. Canada, through our new Feminist International Assistance Policy, is committed to supporting these efforts. We encourage UNHCR to launch updated Commitments to Refugee Women with a clear implementation plan. We also urge UNHCR to continue making improvements to its annual reporting within the UN System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.

Canada firmly believes that the application of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) is a critical opportunity to transform refugee responses. Canada was pleased by the progress conveyed during the special segment yesterday, in particular the actions of several countries hosting large numbers of refugees. We also welcomed the dynamic partnerships which were profiled, with the World Bank, civil society and the private sector. Among other aspects, we look forward to the CRRF process demonstrating how including refugees more actively in host communities and host country systems can benefit refugees themselves, hosting countries, and countries of origin. For example, by including refugees in host country schools and curricula, rather than setting up parallel structures, investments in refugee education can support national systems. Including refugees in national education systems also increases their chances to access safe and quality education, dramatically increasing their potential to contribute positively to host societies and to eventually rebuild home countries. We strongly support UNHCR's education strategy which reflects this premise, and we

encourage the Agency to continue to develop partnerships across the humanitarian – development spectrum to advance this approach.

Applying the CRRF also entails expanding access to third country solutions, including both traditional resettlement and complementary pathways. We are heartened by the interest among many states in learning more about Canada’s experience with private sponsorship and other community-based resettlement models through the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative (GRSI), and we welcome other interested states to come forward. We must also encourage other segments of our societies, including the private sector, universities, and professional associations, to see the opportunities that come with opening new pathways and to contribute to third-country solutions.

We applaud the efforts of UNHCR to support states and other stakeholders in the application of the CRRF and the development of the Global Compact on Refugees. We are encouraged by the nascent but growing involvement of development agencies, financial institutions, and government line ministries in the CRRF processes at the country level. We encourage UNHCR and host states to find ways to increase the participation of refugees and host communities themselves in the CRRF processes.

Madame Chair,

We firmly believe the Global Compact on Refugees is an opportunity for all of us to come together, to stand with refugees and host countries, and to commit to a program of action based on inclusion, solidarity and true global engagement. Canada has recently begun sharing a discussion paper that outlines our views in this regard in greater detail and which provides concrete recommendations for the Global Compact’s Programme of Action. We look forward to views from all of you regarding these recommendations and to working with you to support UNHCR in the development and adoption of a Compact of which we can all be proud.