

69<sup>th</sup> Session of the Executive Committee of High Commissioner's Programme

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Statement by H.E. Ms Vesna Batistić Kos,

Ambassador, Permanent representative of the Republic of Croatia

General debate, ITEM 3

*Thank you Mister Chair,*

Croatia aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union.

We would like to thank the High Commissioner for providing a thorough overview of UNHCR activities and challenges, showing yet again dedication of the Office to strengthen humanitarian space.

The scope of the migration and refugee crises we are facing today, became one of the biggest challenges the world and Europe has ever faced. The international community has made crucial steps forward since the adoption of New York Declaration in 2016. Last year has been marked by intensive and constructive consultation on Global compact on Refugees. We would like to use this opportunity to commend UNHCR for its leadership. Its role that has always steered the consultation in the spirit of cooperation well grounded on mutual respect proved to be indispensable in order to reach a well balanced final draft we have in front of us.

Croatia fully supports the **Global compact on refugees** and calls on other MS to adopt this milestone in our quest for resolving the global refugee situations. Its effective implementation is an opportunity for international community to stand in solidarity by sharing the global responsibility in hosting the world's refugees.

We welcome the already positive outcomes arising from the application of the **CRRF**. Croatia is of the opinion that humanitarian and development aid do not exclude each other but its synergic application can bring durable positive results for all, refugees and host communities, as well as the countries of origin.

As you have stated High Commissioner the regional approach is very relevant, by joining

together, **regions** can give additional support thus accomplishing much more than countries alone. We are glad to say that we see more positive signals in our region as well. Croatia has been continuously cooperating with countries in the Southeast Europe and international organizations in implementation of **the Regional Housing Program in the Framework of the Sarajevo Process**. The progress was made by joint cooperation between the UNHCR, the Croatian Government, the governments of the countries of Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro and the international donors. Croatian authorities have, through reconstruction and housing program, further enabled the return of a significant number of persons and provided financial resources from the state budget for the implementation of the national program of return, care of displaced persons, returnees and refugees, reconstruction and housing.

Mister High Commissioner,

The number of asylum seekers is raising in Croatia compared to years before the migration crises. In 2016 there was 2.234 claims for international protection compared to 2015, amounting to 211 cases. In 2017, 1.887 cases were registered. Croatian institutions are acting in accordance with established international humanitarian law by taking into account the principles of solidarity included in our system of protection, which we safeguard and constantly improve since the nineties.

Migrations are here to stay and most likely further grow in numbers. We should profit from the consensus reached to ascertain proper follow up in order to protect refugees and their rights, alleviate negative consequences of illegal migrations and at the same time, benefit from the well managed ones. This responsibility lies on our organization and us. Refugees need our timely support through concrete engagement of all of us.

Thank you!