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UNHCR Executive Committee session

Statement by Vice-minister of Interior of the Republic of Lithuania,

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Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour to participate in this event and to address you on behalf of Lithuania. I would like to thank the speakers of the High Level Panel for their insightful presentations. I wish to take this opportunity to express Lithuania's gratitude to the UNHCR for the long-lasting partnership and fruitful cooperation.

Lithuania fully aligns itself with the statement of the European Union and would like to add a few remarks in our national capacity.

As we witness new and continued conflicts as well as forced displacement induced by climate change and natural disasters, we share the concern of the High Commissioner regarding the increasing humanitarian needs and challenges of the most vulnerable people. We praise the High Commissioner and his staff for their work dedicated to solving problems of refugees, especially in insecure environments. In this regard, Lithuania contributes every year to the alleviation of these humanitarian crises by allocating funds through the office of the UNHCR.

We highly value the activities of the UNHCR in ensuring international protection and safeguarding the rights and welfare of refugees. Human mobility is a global phenomenon that requires global solutions in order to manage it in a humane, dignified and secure way.

Let me express our gratitude to the work of the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees in the process of adoption and implementation of the *Global Compact on Refugees*. We do believe that the *Global Compact* will strengthen the international

response to the movements of refugees and capabilities to ensure their safe return. Moreover, the first-ever *Global Refugee Forum* will be a good basis and platform to mobilize concrete actions and implement the provisions of the *Global Compact on Refugees*. Lithuania as committed member of the international community will continue to address the issue of refugees and contribute in the spirit of solidarity.

While the *Global Compact* focuses on refugee situations, we must not lose from sight **internally displaced persons** who can often be even more vulnerable, due to the security risks and lack of access in areas affected by conflict and instability. Be it Georgia, Myanmar or IDPs fleeing the zone of Russian aggression in Ukraine, there is a strong need for mobilization of global attention and concrete recommendations for finding solutions to internal displacement globally. We commend UNHCR for the support it has provided to IDPs through protection and legal assistance, policy development as well as capacity building.

Mr. Chair,

Turning now to the topic of our high-level meeting, I would like to underline that ever since becoming a party to both Conventions regarding **statelessness**, Lithuania has been putting efforts to reduce this phenomenon and has been supporting the *#I Belong Campaign* and the *Global Action Plan to End Statelessness by 2024*.

It is worth mentioning that year by year, the already small number of stateless persons in the Republic of Lithuania is becoming even smaller. In 5 past years the drop was quite significant – 21 % and the number of stateless persons in Lithuania is just over 3000, which constitutes only 0,1 % of our population, and is constantly declining.

I would like to point out that 98 % of stateless persons in Lithuania have long-term (permanent) residence permits.

Nevertheless, Mr. Chair, let me assure you that we are considering measures aiming at further reduction of number of stateless persons in Lithuania:

- 1) First, *to amend the Law on Citizenship* and ensure that citizenship of Lithuania is granted to children born on the territory of Lithuania if their parents are stateless persons holding a residence permit, *either permanent or temporary*;
- 2) Second, *to assess* whether the absence of dedicated legal provisions for determination of statelessness poses problems to any one in practice, bearing in mind the small number of persons who could potentially be subject to such a procedure;
- 3) And third, *to carry out an analysis* in every single case in order to clarify why stateless persons are not applying for citizenship of Lithuania, even if they are eligible

Mr. President, I do believe that these measures will contribute towards our goal to end statelessness and will help to find solutions for global refugee-related challenges we all face today.

I thank you.