

## **Transcript of the remarks delivered by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi at the High-level Forum on legal pathways to protection 29/11/2022**

Thank you very much Ylva [Johansson]. And thanks Vít Rakušan also for organizing this meeting, much appreciated. It's important to keep in focus this important issue. And thanks both of you, and Ylva [Johansson] thanks to you in particular for your personal commitment, which I know by personal experience myself is very strong.

We are now speaking against the backdrop of some of the biggest challenges that humanity has ever faced together – from climate to the rising cost of living, largely due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and conflict that is spreading in many parts of the world with very few conflicts being resolved.

Underpinning all of this is, of course, massive human displacement. We, at UNHCR, count 103 million people - refugees or displaced. Almost all of them live either in their country as internally displaced or in countries neighbouring crisis and conflict.

Now, what is remarkable is that in spite of this major combination of challenges in many, many places, protection continues to be extended to people in flight. Think of what happened to millions of Ukrainians which proved that in Europe too, protection for large numbers of refugees is not only possible, but can be extended in a very efficient and humane way. And of course, think of other places – I always quote Uganda, which even in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic with borders shut and the pandemic raging, was hosting tens of thousands of refugees streaming in from nearby Congo. Increasingly also, we observe around the world a strong focus not only on traditional responses to refugee flows, but on inclusion: inclusion in education, inclusion in health, inclusion in social services, in work.

And protection and inclusion are critical to save and improve lives. While of course we continue, we must all collectively continue to work to remove obstacles for people to return. We should never forget – because we're always thinking of refugees as people attracted by the rich countries – the vast majority of refugees want to return, if possible, to their own country. But in this context of course, for some in particular and often the most vulnerable, greater support is needed – especially for those with particular needs that cannot be met in those host countries that are receiving them or that even may not be safe in those countries.

Think of mothers with disabled children, think of single women full of potential but unsafe even when they flee their country, think of LGBTIQ refugees still trying to hide who they are because in the countries that have hosted them, discrimination may be as rampant as in their own country. For all of these and many others, resettlement is a solution – could be very well the only solution. Resettlement is also a powerful concrete message of global solidarity.

I think we're all aware of the frustrations and the perceptions that the strong humanitarian response to the war in Ukraine have generated. Resettlement is somehow another tangible demonstration that Europe in particular cares for all refugees and supports all host countries concretely. We've come a long way together – since 2016, we estimate that 100,000 people have been resettled to the European Union also with complimentary pathways.

This year (2022), resettlement has picked up again after some years of slow progress. 48,000 refugees globally resettled through UNHCR. Many thanks – I know they're present – to the United States, but also to Canada and Germany. 30% of the refugees resettled this year have

gone to the European Union and I hope that we can boost this figure to get closer to the targets that we have fixed for 2022.

I also want to welcome community sponsorship programmes, very important. I was recently in Germany and could discuss the success of the “NesT” community sponsorship, but also in Spain, Ireland and other places. Of course, if we look at next year, globally we estimate that in an ideal world 2 million people would be in need of resettlement.

Now, we’ve heard already from Ylva [Johansson] that 29,000 have been pledged by the EU. It’s commendable. We hope that others can join. Ideally, a target of 40,000 should be within reach in addition of course to the Afghans that are being taken into Europe through other ways. Now having said this, we fully appreciate more than ever the other challenges that you are facing in Europe, especially those caused by the Russian invasion of Ukraine: the refugee influx, the domestic costs, the inflationary pressures, pressures that you’re all facing and on the back of the Afghan evacuations that have kept you busy since last year.

So I appeal particularly to those that do have the absorption capacity, and hope that we can keep up in the midst, as Ylva [Johansson] said, of all these challenges the numbers for resettlement. Big thanks to those of you – in particular Finland, Norway and Sweden – that are also keeping the door open for emergency resettlement, something that is for much smaller numbers, but is truly, truly life-saving.

And very important to echo what Ylva [Johansson] said before I close – to also continue to open up new what we call complementary pathways. Europe is in the lead in offering education opportunities to refugees. In Italy, in Portugal, in France and in Germany. Scholarships are very, very important. We also encourage labour mobility schemes, as has already been mentioned. We have good examples from around the world that could inspire, in Canada for example, or in Australia. And we really welcome the Commission’s commitment to this particular I would say win-win option of labour pathways for refugees – a win for them and a win for the communities and societies that offered them work opportunities

This is of course part of a larger discussion, which I want to mention before I close: the need to create regular and orderly migration channels – not refugee resettlement – migration channels, in order to satisfy migration needs of industrialized countries and reduce the pressure on the asylum channel that is unduly burdened now by people that are moving for other reasons because simply they have no option. If I can also in this context, I also make a strong appeal to those of you who can, to open up more space for family reunification, which is another powerful integration tool for refugees in countries where they go to.

I want to finish by reminding everybody that in December 2023, UNHCR will convene its second Global Refugee Forum at Ministerial level. I would like to encourage all States present to participate at the most senior level possible. And please come if you come to that meeting with pledges of support also in these areas of resettlement and complementary pathways, which are one of the most concrete examples of practice of the Global Compact on Refugees that has been with us for the past few years. Thank you again to everybody for your interest, participation and above all for the commitments that you will be making going forward. Thank you Ylva.