

The devastating convergence of conflict, climate and COVID for refugees and displaced people

Thank you Mr President. Let me first thank the High Commissioner for his comprehensive briefing and for the dedicated work of his teams around the world.

The United Kingdom is committed to a longer term, holistic approach to refugee assistance and protection that restores dignity and offers refugees a viable future. To this end, the UK has contributed over \$570 million to the vital work of the UNHCR over the last 5 years.

I would also like to acknowledge the huge generosity of host nations in opening their borders and homes to those forced to flee. UK funding has played a key role in supporting communities strengthen resilience and self-reliance.

Amongst others, the UK has provided:

\$970 million to support refugees in Lebanon since 2011

\$424 million to the Rohingya refugee response in Bangladesh since 2017

And \$278 million to programmes in Uganda over a six year period.

Now the High Commissioner raised a number of important themes in his presentation. I would like to address 3 of issues; conflict, climate change and COVID19.

First, on conflict, Security Council efforts to support political solutions to humanitarian crises are clearly an essential part of the picture but actors on the ground have responsibilities too – this includes adherence to International Humanitarian Law and ensuring that any refugee returns are voluntary, safe and dignified. It's only through demonstrated compliance with the humanitarian principles (humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence) that humanitarian actors can build the trust necessary to gain, and maintain, access to displaced populations in need.

Just touching on some of the regional issues, in Myanmar the UK has spent over \$23 million in humanitarian aid to support displaced people since the military coup in February whilst backing the efforts of ASEAN and the UN as well as regional partners to find a political solution.

In Ethiopia, as we heard, the conflict has displaced millions. We continue to support African Union Special Envoy Obasanjo's efforts to find a political route to sustainable peace.

And in Syria, whilst we hope refugees will ultimately be able to return home

we agree with the UN judgement that conditions in Syria do not currently allow this and firmly believe that Security Council resolution 2254 offers a clear path out of conflict which protects the rights of all Syrians in which civil society, women and minorities must play a role.

Mr President, turning to conflict and climate change, as the High Commissioner said the devastating convergence of these factors bears day-to-day consequences for those forced to flee. At COP26, we came together and delivered an ambitious roadmap to keep global warming to 1.5 degrees and, in doing so, lessen the impact on vulnerable populations, including refugees and displaced persons. But as we saw on our visit to your country Mr President, Niger, the security implications of climate are real and present.

Finally, on COVID19, the UK has encouraged this Council to be alert to the impact of COVID on international peace and security and to consider the ways in which COVID19 has created socio-economic conditions that fuel conflict, unrest and subsequent displacement.

The implementation of resolutions 2565 and 2532 can help deliver equitable access to vaccines in conflict and humanitarian settings, including to refugees and internally displaced populations.

As a leading donor to COVAX, the UK welcomes news this month that coronavirus vaccine doses are getting to Afghan refugees through the humanitarian buffer of last resort.

We hope to see even more refugee communities helped by this mechanism next year and we look forward to further discussion with the Council next week. Thank you Mr President