



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1480 Vienna, 4 July 2024

EU Statement on the occasion of World Refugee Day

1. This year, we mark the 24th anniversary of the UN declaration to designate 20th June as World Refugee Day, honouring the strength and courage of all those forced to flee their homes to escape conflict or persecution.
2. The EU notes with deep regret that the number of forcibly displaced persons has increased in recent years, with a record of 120 million people forcibly displaced around the world today.
3. The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union reaffirms that fundamental freedoms and human rights are guaranteed equally to all persons residing in the EU regardless of their status. The EU reiterates its unwavering commitment to the right to seek and enjoy asylum and the principle of non-refoulement, enshrined in both the 1951 Refugee Convention and in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, which must always be respected. In this regard, we recall the new Pact on Migration and Asylum, which strengthens the EU framework for migration and asylum.
4. The Pact also addresses situations where refugees are instrumentalised by third countries for political purposes. While strongly condemning any such attempts, including by Russia and Belarus, we are committed to ensuring an immediate and appropriate response, in compliance with EU and international law, including the protection of refugee's fundamental rights.
5. The EU also addresses the root causes of forced displacement, including through conflict prevention and resolution, as well as wider efforts to foster peace and security. Protecting women and children in fragile and vulnerable

settings, and providing access to education and social activities, continue to be areas of special focus in the EU's efforts, both at their homes and by supporting countries hosting large numbers of refugees.

6. For decades, the EU has been a leading humanitarian, development and peace donor in various situations of forced displacement and, together with its Members States, has been at the forefront of the international response to major refugee crises, being the biggest donor to the Syrian crisis response, with EUR 33.3 billion mobilised since 2011.
7. At the same time, the EU also hosts an increasing number of refugees and people forced to flee their homes. For example, due to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, EU Member States now host over 4.2 million people from Ukraine under temporary protection, of which one third are children. The European Union has provided Ukraine with coordinated humanitarian, political, financial and material support. Beyond the immediate support provided, the EU has also taken further steps to ensure that the beneficiaries can effectively access their right to education, healthcare, accommodation and work. The recent Council agreement to prolong temporary protection by another year until March 2026 is a clear sign of our steadfast commitment.
8. The EU remains deeply concerned about Russia's unlawful deportation and forced transfer of Ukrainian children to the Russian Federation and Belarus. The EU supports initiatives aimed at seeking to clarify the fate of these children. These children must be returned to their homes and reunited with their families and communities. The first arrest warrants issued by the International Criminal Court since the onset of Russia's full-scale invasion, singling out these acts of unlawful deportation and forcible transfer of children as war crimes, illustrate the urgency and severity of this issue. The European Union is fully committed to taking all necessary efforts to ensure that those responsible for these crimes are held accountable.
9. Regarding the situation of displaced Karabakh Armenians, we recall our concerns on the extremely difficult situation arising from their mass exodus. We continue to provide assistance in responding to the needs of the displaced persons, while reiterating the importance of creating the conditions for the voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable return of the refugees, as well as for the preservation of cultural, religious heritage and property rights. The EU

continues to support all efforts towards sustainable peace and security in the region.

10. In conclusion, we confirm our commitment to providing safe and legal pathways to protection. We will continue to work closely with international partners, on resettlement and complementary pathways that can help scale-up admission from priority regions.

The Candidate Countries NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ALBANIA*, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA*, as well as GEORGIA, and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

* North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, and Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.