

**Statement by Sri Lanka at the Pledging Conference of the United Nations High
Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)**

12 December 2018

Mr. Chairperson,
High Commissioner,
Distinguished delegates,

Let me take this opportunity to convey our sincere appreciation to the UNHCR, and to you, Mr. High Commissioner, for the focused, dedicated and relentless contribution that is being made by the UNHCR to effectively fulfil all aspects of its mandate.

Your pragmatic leadership to this important humanitarian cause - that is, protection for refugees and persons in situations of forced displacement - deserves special compliments.

As you have very poignantly mentioned in your statement to the Executive Committee on 1 October 2018, we are faced today with an unprecedented situation where 'the principles and values of international cooperation have come under immense pressure'. It is pertinent to note that multilateralism, which has served as the basis for such international cooperation, currently faces its severest test in recent times. Developments at the ongoing International Conference on Migration would testify to the grounds that are resorted to, to leave even compacts and declarations that are essentially of a voluntary nature.

We are pleased, however, that in the 'Global Appeal 2019' Update released by the UNHCR today, it is stated "*..the global compact on refugees (GCR) has emerged as a rallying point for multilateralism and solidarity, reflecting a realistic balance of interests and aspirations of host countries, of donors and of others..*". We hope the GCR will live true to this expectation.

Against this backdrop, we are fully aware, Mr. Chairperson that, in addition to its present mandate, the UNHCR will be expected to fulfil its responsibilities in a more coherent and sustained manner, especially following the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR). It is our earnest desire that the commitments made by the international community to the GCR remain on course, transforming into meaningful, practical measures that will help address the protection needs of millions of people who remain helpless and in need. In this context, the role of UNHCR has become even more pronounced, given that the number of refugees globally has risen by almost a one-fifth, as the High Commissioner has highlighted in his recent statement.

All this, in our view, calls for sober reflection on how the world should respond to the increasing challenge of assuring protection and support and meeting the specific needs of populations of concern.

Central to effectively addressing this challenge remains the strengthened role of UNHCR with capacity to deliver on time and with increased accessibility.

Sri Lanka fully recognizes the challenges that lie ahead, and wishes to reiterate its support and cooperation to UNHCR, as it continues with its programmes in different regions of the world under challenging circumstances.

Sri Lanka particularly appreciates the support extended by UNHCR in providing protection and shelter for IDPs under national resettlement programmes, as well as its important role with regard to assistance for returnees. We also acknowledge the contributions of stakeholders – partner countries and agencies, in this process.

In continued appreciation of the role and contribution of UNHCR and in earnest expectation that UNHCR would be ‘empowered’ to deliver more strengthened assistance and protection as part of its mandate, Sri Lanka is pleased to pledge a contribution of US\$ 15,000, un-earmarked to all pillars of UNHCR’s programme, in response to its 2019 Global Appeal.

We also take this opportunity to thank donors and partners who have made generous contributions over the years towards the UNHCR, and we encourage them as well as others able to do so, to keep on supporting its work, through enhanced resources.

I thank you, Mr. Chairperson.