

3rd Tokyo Immigration Forum: Speech by UNHCR Representative in Japan

Thursday, 21 December 2023

Introduction

Commissioner Kikuchi, Excellencies, distinguished representatives of the participating Governments and International Organization for Migration, thank you for having UNHCR at the 3rd Tokyo Immigration Forum. I am particularly grateful that the Forum includes a session focusing on the global and regional refugee issues. While distinct, migration and asylum are interlinked. An effective and credible asylum system goes hand in hand with a system of safe, orderly and regular migration.

It is also timely because Japan, represented by Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa, presided over the second Global Refugee Forum (GRF), as one of the co-conveners, held in Geneva, Switzerland, last week. Since I just came back from Geneva myself, I would like to take this opportunity to share some of the key takeaways from the GRF.

GRF is the world's largest gathering on refugee issues. It is held every four years with four broad objectives: (i) ease pressures on refugee-hosting countries, (ii) enhance refugee self-reliance, (iii) increase access to third-country solutions, and (iv) improve conditions in countries of origin towards voluntary repatriation.

While continuing to be seized of the humanitarian crises in Gaza and Ukraine, GRF focused also on other humanitarian crises – often forgotten - such as the flow of people taking the dangerous journey crossing the Mediterranean and the Bay of Bengal, as well as the conflicts in Sudan, Syria, Afghanistan, Myanmar, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Americas. In addition, GRF examined closely the impact of climate change as it exacerbates the crises, for instance in the Sahel region of Africa.

The 2nd GRF was attended by more than 4,200 participants, including 300 refugees and representatives of governments, civil society, international

and development agencies, business leaders, faith-based organizations, academics and others - truly a whole of society approach.

Outcomes of the 2nd Global Refugee Forum

What were the outcomes of the 2nd GRF? The GRF is organized around the “pledges” announced by various stakeholders to support refugees and host communities. More than 1,600 pledges of financial, material, policy and other forms of support were announced in Geneva last week. Donors have pledged to provide over \$2.2 billion over the coming years. From the private sector, commitment was made over \$250 million in funding pledges, one million pro bono hours, jobs for 100,000 refugees and over 400,000 training opportunities, over \$180 million in investment into refugee-owned, refugee-supporting ventures, and over 6,000 scholarships.

Japan launched the "Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) Nexus" as a multi-stakeholder pledge, stressing the need for short-term humanitarian assistance and a mid- to long-term development and

peace-building approach implemented concurrently. It provides a platform for collaboration among donor countries, host countries, international organizations, and other key actors to realize human security of refugees and those hosting them towards the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. Japan also stated its support for resettlement, education-focused pathways, as well as enhanced international protection for those fleeing conflict. Uniqlo, Japanese clothing company, appealed to the private sector to step up its effort to ensure self-reliance of refugees including through their employment.

It was a true occasion of international unity and solidarity amid increasing polarization in the world. Our High Commissioner, Filippo Grandi characterized the 2nd GRF as follows: it is “... a moment of unity, in which all of us join forces to ensure that those who flee because their life, freedom and security are threatened can find protection; and that everything is done to resolve their exile as soon as possible.”

Conclusion

Madame Sadako Ogata, former High Commissioner for Refugees, often said “there is no humanitarian solution to a humanitarian problem.” We need political solutions to forced displacement. It is not only a humanitarian but also development and peace-building agenda. The road ahead is still long, but UNHCR will continue to seek solutions, together with you, to the fundamental problems of humanitarian crises.

Thank you.