

High level event on “Strengthening cooperation on migration and refugee movements under the new development agenda”

Statement by H.E. Mr. David Dondua, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia

Tuesday, September 2, 2020

Mr. Secretary-General, Mr. Deputy Secretary-General, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a profound honour to take the floor at this timely event highlighting the importance and interconnection of human mobility and sustainable development. Today's debate is particularly pertinent and timely, given both the increasing number of new forced displacement worldwide, as well as the persisting challenge of protracted displacement.

I would also like to respond to the alarming situation evolving with regard to the irregular migration across the globe, including in the Mediterranean Sea, which nowadays represents the world's most dangerous border crossing.

In this context, we welcome the readiness to cooperation between the EU and the relevant countries in the region, as well as international organisations, first of all the African Union, and the wider international community, including the UN Security Council, and call upon all stakeholders to increase their efforts to address the root causes of such a humanitarian disaster, as well as tackling trafficking and smuggling in the Mediterranean. I also welcome active involvement of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees to address effectively the deep real causes of irregular migration: poverty, conflicts, crisis, and human rights violations. I welcome the prospects of close cooperation in this regard between all stakeholders in the Mediterranean region.

I would like to pay special attention to the one of the most challenging components of migration: forced displacement.

The problem of displacement is well-known to Georgia as a country of both origin and destination of migration. Georgia is a host country for more than 1 million refugees and asylum seekers. Since the 1970s, we have been facing a severe problem of IDPs and refugees originating from the two regions of Georgia, with the new wave of displacement following the 2008 Georgia-Russia war. Overall, as a result of the full-scale Russian invasion and illegal military occupation of the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and the subsequent ethnic cleansing, nearly half a million persons have been displaced. Their homes were, for the most part, destroyed or sold off, their families and communities torn apart.

To our regret, twenty-one years after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the international community has made limited progress in preventing forced displacement and in identifying durable solutions. According to the latest available data, the number of refugees and IDPs has reached the highest levels since the Second World War, few forcibly displaced persons are able to return to their home communities, millions of refugees remain caught in situations of protracted displacement. Thus, the objectives and actions in regard to refugees, asylum-seekers and displaced persons, as they were listed in Chapter 5 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, remain as relevant today as they were 21 years ago.

The MDGs also focused on education, health and hunger but, unfortunately, they failed to protect the human rights of migrants and enhance the positive effects of this enabler for global sustainable development.