77th session of UNHCR EXCOM, 12-16 October 2026
Statement by the Council of Europe

Madam Chairperson,

Mr. High Commissioner,

The Council of Europe strongly supports the UNHCR's mandate and welcomes the fruitful co-operation established with the UN Refugee Agency, which plays a vital role in promoting the Council of Europe's human rights standards within the broader asylum and migration framework. While this year marks the 75th anniversary of the Geneva (Refugee) Convention, a landmark instrument which fundamental principles continue to inspire our action, this collaboration has proved to be instrumental in standard-setting, monitoring, and capacity-building activities across the 46 member states of our Organisation.

The European Convention on Human Rights and the Court's case-law constitute the cornerstone of the continent's system of human rights protection. Under Article 1 of the Convention, states are bound to secure to everyone within their jurisdiction the rights and freedoms defined herein. The term 'everyone' covers non-nationals, including migrants, asylum seekers and refugees.

The European Court of Human Rights remains the ultimate legal recourse for the protection of life and dignity of asylum seekers and refugees in Europe. The protection it provides notably from *non-refoulement*, under Article 3 of the Convention, has proved to be vital in practice and includes protection from ill-treatment emanating from state and non-state actors, as well as situations of generalised violence. Particularly important have also been the safeguards set by the Court's case law concerning refugees' family life and unity.

The Council of Europe's action continues to focus on the needs and protection of the around five million war-displaced Ukrainians, including children and women, who find themselves in the member states.

The missions carried out in 2026 by the Council of Europe confirmed that after four years, and - while the EU temporary protection framework continues to be limited in time - European states' responses to the needs of war-displaced Ukrainians can still be characterised as timely, adequate and multi-faceted.

Confronted with many unprecedented challenges, governmental and civil society support systems have facilitated smooth reception and effective integration for the displaced, addressing complex social and economic needs. The Ukrainian communities present in CoE member states already before 2022 have also contributed significantly to these efforts, providing a familiar and protected environment for the war-displaced persons.

Nevertheless, many challenges persist, including those related to Ukrainians' access to labour market, the recognition of professional and academic qualifications and the protection of vulnerable persons such as children, including those unaccompanied.

With a view of addressing these, often complex, issues, the Council of Europe offers and provides support and assistance to its member states in order to further enhance reception, protection and integration of war-displaced Ukrainians.

To outline a few concrete examples, allow me to mention, the European Qualification Passport for Refugees (EQPR), which is based on the Council of Europe Lisbon Recognition Convention; the Council of Europe Intercultural Cities Programme, which has established a network of 160 cities, regions and local authorities around the world aiming to enhance diversity through the exchange of practical experiences and support each other in creating local and inclusive communities and the Council of Europe Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals (HELP) Programme, especially its free on line courses on issues related to vulnerable persons in the context of migration, gender equality, mental health and alternatives to detention.

The Council of Europe reiterates its staunch support to the UNHCR and its global action, including through the implementation of its pledges to the Global Compact on Refugees, which advance the objectives of the Compact in the crucial areas of statelessness, health, intercultural inclusion, gender equality and protection. In this view, we look forward to the further development and strengthening of our excellent and concrete co-operation aimed at protecting the rights of refugees and migrants and ensuring safe and conducive environment for these particularly vulnerable groups.