

Thank you, Chair.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

UNHCR, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, would like to thank ESCAP Members and its Secretariat for giving us the opportunity to take the floor.

UNHCR's primary purpose is to safeguard the rights and well-being of people who have been forced to flee while also striving to find lasting solutions to the over 13 million people falling under our mandated responsibilities in Asia and the Pacific.

This region is still suffering from the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and is not spared from conflicts and natural disasters, including linked to the climate crisis. All those elements constitute drivers to forced displacement and increased vulnerability.

The SDGs play a key role to find lasting solutions to the forcibly displaced, as, globally, 74% of all refugees live in low- and middle-income countries.

The latest *SDG Progress Report* paints a sobering picture, projecting that Asia-Pacific will miss 90 per cent of the 118 measurable targets by 2030. The stateless and forcibly displaced, already facing socio-economic disadvantages and protection gaps, are among those likely to be most affected by these anticipated shortcomings.

In this context, UNHCR welcomes the declared ambition of this year's *Sustainable Development Forum* to assess progress against the five SDGs under review (6, 7, 9, 11 and 17).

Allow me to stress that at global level, in relation to Goals 6 and 7, many refugees and displaced who live in camps do not have sufficient access to clean water and sanitation; or to electricity. Goal 9 is all too often out of reach for many displaced persons for whom the lack of internet connectivity, as well as costly devices and limited training opportunities, prevent many from taking advantage of new technologies.

Against this backdrop, SDGs 11 and 17 have the potential to play a key role in catalysing SDG progress for the stateless and forcibly displaced:

Goal 11, is a key SDG for UNHCR as, contrary to popular belief, the majority of refugees worldwide do not live in camps, but in cities and urban settings; and

Goal 17, is the cornerstone of the *Global Compact on Refugees*, affirmed in 2018, calling for a whole-of-society-approach in the refugee response, including private sector, academia, civil society and refugees themselves. The SDGs are explicitly linked to the *Global Compact on Refugees*, which supports efforts to ensure refugees are included in working towards achieving the *Goals*. The second *Global Refugee Forum* will be convened in Geneva in Switzerland from 13 to 15 December 2023. This constitutes an opportunity for whole-of-society actors to make genuinely transformational pledges to work towards lasting solutions for refugees and commit to responsibility and burden-sharing with host countries.

In summary, to collectively realise the promise of the SDGs and the Leave No One Behind Principle in our region, it is imperative to improve the situation of refugees, internally displaced and stateless people and to implement sustainable solutions, as well as support the development of countries generously hosting those who have been forced to flee.

Thank you, Chair.