



## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

### **Response to the Address by the UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, H.E. Gillian Triggs**

As delivered by Ambassador Michael Carpenter  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
February 16, 2023

Commissioner Triggs, welcome to the Permanent Council and thank you for your timely address.

As a direct result of Russia's shameless, unprovoked war against Ukraine, the OSCE region is facing the largest forced displacement of refugees since World War Two, as you just noted. Now, nearly one year since Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, we continue to witness a refugee crisis of immense magnitude, with over eight million refugees from Ukraine fleeing the war.

Ukraine's neighbors as well as countries farther afield are generously sheltering refugees – refugees who have experienced the trauma of war including bombings, killings, and unconscionable atrocities and abuses, including conflict-related sexual violence. We commend UNHCR for its exemplary work to promote the protection of vulnerable populations from gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and abuse. Sadly, we are also seeing reports of growing numbers of unaccompanied children ending up as refugees. Not all children separated from their parents find safe shelter.

Mr. Chair, the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine is entirely man-made. All it takes to stop more needless suffering is for the man who caused it — Vladimir Putin — to end his brutal war of choice.

That is not the case with last week's tragic natural disaster in Türkiye and Syria. The United States is profoundly saddened by the destruction and human suffering wrought by the earthquake in eastern Türkiye and Syria on February 6. With over 36,000 dead and millions more displaced, this disaster is one of the most devastating earthquakes of the century. The United States is working alongside UNHCR and other humanitarian partners to help provide immediate relief to the victims both in Türkiye and Syria, where conditions are further exacerbated by the on-going conflict. To date the United States has committed \$85 million for humanitarian partners to flow additional health, food, shelter, and protection assistance to both Syria and Türkiye.

Lastly, Mr. Chair, the OSCE has a long history of cooperation with UNHCR. Let us continue this critical work in Ukraine, Türkiye, and wherever it may be needed across the OSCE region.

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