



Delegation of Canada  
to the OSCE

Délégation du Canada  
auprès de l'OSCE

**JOINT STATEMENT DELIVERED BY AMBASSADOR JOCELYN KINNEAR  
ON “WORLD REFUGEE DAY”**

**1480<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

**4 July 2024**

Madam Chair,

I am delivering this statement on behalf of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, the United Kingdom and my own country, Canada.

In marking World Refugee Day, we show solidarity with millions of refugees, and recommit to the task of responding to their humanitarian needs and finding durable solutions to their situations. Compared to a decade ago, the total number of refugees globally has more than tripled – with a 7% increase in 2023 alone. Persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations and natural disasters have led to the forcible displacement of more than 117 million people worldwide.

The Russian Federation’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine continues to be the catalyst for massive displacement in the OSCE region and the largest cross-border movement of people in Europe since the Second World War. The UNHCR is currently reporting that almost 6.5 million refugees have been forced to flee Ukraine and an additional 3.5 million individuals have been internally displaced. Large-scale attacks by the Russian Federation across Ukraine, the targeting of energy infrastructure, and a ground offensive in Kharkiv region, all continue to drive a need for life-saving humanitarian assistance to people living close to the frontline. As winter approaches, the UNHCR predicts further displacement and humanitarian need.

The UNHCR has also noted the impact of war, destruction and displacement on Ukrainian children and their access to education. They report that, in the current academic year, nearly one million children – a quarter of all Ukrainian children enrolled in school – have been unable to attend in-person learning, and that frequent air raid alarms and power outages have disrupted their education, leading to learning losses and long-term implications for their development.

We are also concerned regarding the displacement by conflict of more than 115,000 ethnic Armenians in late 2023 into Armenia, and the acute humanitarian challenges that they have faced as a result.

Those driven from their homes within the OSCE region add to those already fleeing conflict and persecution from other regions of the world to seek refuge in this region. In the face of this challenge, we commend host countries for opening their borders, for showing empathy and care, and for their efforts to grant refugees the opportunity to study, work, and live decent lives in safety. In this regard, we note the efforts of Poland, Czechia and Moldova in welcoming Ukrainian refugees, as well as the work done by Türkiye, which is among the top refugee-hosting countries globally, hosting 3.4 million refugees and asylum seekers.

We emphasize the importance of inclusion and diversity, and of the positive impact that newcomers can have on our societies and economies. In addressing forcible displacement, we must strive to reach those most in need, including women and girls, and to address parallel risks and challenges such as trafficking, discrimination and intolerance.

As participating States of the OSCE we must recall that it is incumbent on all of us to provide international protection and assistance to refugees, and to find durable and dignified solutions for them and for other forcibly displaced persons.

Thank you.