I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

The Candidate Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro*, and Serbia*, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia, and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

Mr. Chairperson,

We thank the High Commissioner for his overview and for the Report before us. In 2013, new displacement due to violence, persecution and conflict reached staggering numbers: more than 1.1 million new refugees and 6.5 million IDPs. The availability of asylum was literally a matter of life or death and the protection role of UNHCR has been more critical than ever. We take the opportunity to commend the Agency for its swift response to acute crises unfolding simultaneously, in DRC, Mali, Sudan/South Sudan, Central African Republic and Syria, as well as for its determination to stay engaged in the efforts to tackle protracted displacement.
In our intervention last year, we underlined the need to do more and better, for the cause of refugees and other persons of concern to UNHCR. Today, we reiterate our call and confirm that the European solidarity with those in despair and feeling abandoned remains strong despite a continued economic crisis and the challenges ahead of us. The EU and its MS remain a most committed and principal humanitarian aid donor in the world to ensure protection and relief to those in need.

UNHCR is very much put to the test. The needs of the millions of persons of concern, half of them children, cannot be served with the resources currently available. As a result, protection and assistance to which they are entitled to under international law are not available for all of them. Increasingly, refugees are seen as threats to national security or as a drain on local economies and environment. Efforts by host governments to address refugee-related concerns should not result in a restriction of the rights of refugees, who in fact must be protected in particular against forced return. A better assumption of responsibilities, such as effective abidance by the principle of non-refoulement, effective guarantee of access to asylum procedures and of humane reception conditions, together with increased international cooperation to share the refugee burden, should help preserve the institution of asylum.

Refugee protection in the context of international migration is an issue of concern for the EU and its MS. Therefore, we encourage UNHCR to continue to implement comprehensive regional protection strategies that address protection concerns of refugees in mixed migration flows.

We want to draw special attention to the needs of particular groups of refugees, including vulnerable refugee women, refugee children and urban refugees, and to those of stateless persons. We advocate for increased efforts for their protection, and UNHCR should continue to invest in its institutionalized response to consistently address the protection needs of these categories of persons. UNHCR protection guidelines and strategies targeting these groups, as well as the age/gender/diversity approach and the Education Strategy, should be more speedily and consistently implemented in all refugee situations. Implementation of these guidelines must remain a priority for UNHCR and all its staff.

* The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.
Refugees need both protection and solutions. We have heard the High Commissioner speak about the difficulties of unlocking durable solutions. As long as timetables for return, integration or resettlement are uncertain, we must work together to reduce refugees' dependency on aid. Opportunities for durable solutions could be pursued in conjunction with the cessation of refugee status, that should be applied where appropriate. Humanitarian and development actors have to work together more closely and use their creative synergies to come forward with solutions to pave the way for durable solutions and facilitate refugees' self-sufficiency. We applaud UNHCR for creating a Solutions Steering Group at its Headquarters in Geneva and we hope that discussions in this Group will lead to creative ways of promoting context-specific solutions.

Mr. Chairperson,

The global refugee numbers are on the increase, but we can not overlook an even greater challenge: that of the internally displaced. Over 6.5 million people were newly displaced inside their home countries in 2013. These are people who are forced to flee their homes, often for the very same reasons as refugees – violence, conflict, political strife, human rights abuses – but because they remain within their own country, they do not benefit from the same international protection as refugees. We welcome the High Commissioner's proposal to discuss the persistent gaps, challenges and solutions for the protection of internally displaced persons during this year's High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges, which will take place in Geneva in December.

We also thank UNHCR for its decennial strategic review presented this year, pursuant to General Assembly Resolution 58/153. While we have remained steadfast in our resolve to address the refugee displacement, this remains a "pressing issue" over this decade. The number of persons of concern to UNHCR has almost doubled in ten years, from 20 million in 2003 to 35.8 million today, showing staggering displacement dynamics. UNHCR's budget stood at little over 1 billion USD ten years ago, and for 2013, the Executive Committee approved a Global Needs Assessment budget of 5.3 billion USD. The EU and MS contributions this year cover almost one third of the funding received so far by UNHCR, and represent more than double than 10 years ago. We will continue to do our utmost to help
UNHCR and will encourage others to step up in this time of great need. The number of UNHCR donors must increase over the years, in order to cover the funding gap.

Meanwhile, we encourage UNHCR to continuously look for efficiency in the use of resources. With greater budget come greater responsibilities and we urge UNHCR to wisely prioritize and invest in partnerships as a means to maximize service delivery. Enhanced operational partnerships with other humanitarian actors, UN agencies, other international and non-governmental organizations are essential during emergencies, in the development of transition strategies and in the search for durable solutions. We further encourage UNHCR to continue to increase the effectiveness of UNHCR's operations within the overall collective humanitarian response, as aimed for under the IASC Transformative Agenda.

Mr Chairperson,

We underlined in our statement made ten years ago the importance of asylum and international protection for the EU and its Member States and pointed to our policy framework for the creation of a Common European Asylum System, based on the full and inclusive application of the 1951 Refugee Convention. We have been working for a decade towards this goal. This year we completed the legislative framework for a Common European Asylum System based on high standards of protection for people seeking shelter in the EU. The EU and its MS are now committed to its coherent and effective implementation.

To conclude, the world is changing fast and emergencies are on the increase. We need UNHCR to be a solid and efficient actor in tackling displacement situations. This requires strong partnerships and pursuing innovative approaches, with national and international, multilateral, governmental and civil society actors working together. We remain committed to work continuously for more effective asylum systems, but also for further assistance for the refugees, asylum seekers and other particularly vulnerable persons of concern.

Finally, Mr Chairperson, we support the draft resolution on the "Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees" presented by Finland under this agenda item.

Thank you.