



## OSCE Warsaw Human Dimension Conference 2025

### Plenary Session 9: Humanitarian Issues and Other Commitments Refugees and Displaced Persons

15 October 2025

Intervention delivered by Anikó Bakonyi, director of the refugee programme

The Helsinki Agreement is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. The agreement that in hindsight provided the framework for a paradigm shift during the Cold War, for more cooperation and freedom and for the birth of Helsinki groups. I am proud to represent here one of them, the Hungarian Helsinki Committee.

We should not forget how much we owe to it, to the fact that the respect for the then existing borders has given the possibility for peaceful decades in Europe, even if they were not characterized by the same freedoms foreseen in the Helsinki Final Act in all the countries. The signing of the Helsinki Agreement was preceded by year-long discussions and negotiations. This spirit of cooperation in Europe was drastically altered by the wars that ensued in Yugoslavia and in Ukraine more recently. Europe has shown how effectively it can protect refugees following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine with the activation of temporary protection and with rights attached to it entailing among others, access to the labour market and allowing for the free movement of refugees from Ukraine within the EU.

However, there are some states that seem to value cooperation, solidarity and peace that this brings about to a lesser extent. Hungary is unfortunately one of them. The Hungarian government has been consistently disobeying the common European rules relating to refugees from Ukraine, thereby 1) making them homeless by limiting access to subsidized housing 2) as a result compelling some to return to war-torn Ukraine despite UNHCR's recommendation and 3) Hungary by not taking its own responsibility seriously, burdens other EU countries, breaking not just the law but also the principle of solidarity. This is really not the cooperation expected in this room. The fact that Hungary is not willing to implement the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum, that it continues with its practice of violent pushbacks at its southern border, that it has made its asylum procedure inaccessible are all clear signs of its unwillingness to cooperate.

This conference is designed for dialogue between governments and civil society actors. However, not everybody is here in this room who would be needed for this dialogue to be meaningful. The question is - on this nice and round anniversary- how can we change that, how can we once again evoke the spirit of cooperation?

My hope is that next year we will be more in this room willing to listen and talk. And I also hope that next year I can share a different intervention that will mention fewer human rights violations against refugees in Hungary.

Happy anniversary to all of us!