



STATEMENT BY MR. MUFTI MOHAMMED SAYEED, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
AND MEMBER OF THE INDIAN DELEGATION, ON AGENDA ITEM 40: REPORT OF
THE UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES, QUESTIONS RELATING TO
REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS AND HUMANITARIAN
QUESTIONS AT THE THIRD COMMITTEE OF THE 61ST SESSION OF THE UN
GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON NOVEMBER 8, 2006

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation thanks the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. António Guterres, for his report and introductory statement which provide an account of activities undertaken by UNHCR as well as his vision for addressing the present and future challenges. We would also like to express our satisfaction on the adoption of the thematic conclusions by UNHCR's Executive Committee in October on Statelessness and Women and Girls at Risk which will contribute towards strengthening of protection framework.

We note with satisfaction from the report that global refugee numbers are now the lowest in last 25 years. Mass outflows of new refugees in 2005 were also the lowest in 29 years. However, recent data indicate a drop in annual voluntary repatriation figures and this negative trend needs to be arrested. Also, there has been a significant increase in the total population of concern to UNHCR primarily on account of new situations of internal displacement.

Mr. Chairman

We agree with the High Commissioner that protection must remain at the core of UNHCR's work. New challenges arising out of situations of internal displacement should receive greater attention. However, this must not be at the expense of UNHCR's core activities.

The High Commissioner has called for the UNHCR to play a more active role with regard to internally displaced persons. He has reported that UNHCR has assumed the global cluster lead for conflict-induced internal displacement situations in the areas of protection, camp management & coordination and

emergency shelter and is undertaking activities in this framework. UNHCR's enhanced focus on IDPs should not result in neglect of refugees, which have the first charge on its mandate and its limited resources. Further, UNHCR's role in situations involving IDPs should be on the basis of explicit requests by the States concerned. It should also take into account the complementarities of mandates and expertise of other relevant organizations. We welcome the commencement of discussion in the framework of the meeting of the Executive Committee on clarifying UNHCR's role with regard to IDPs and look forward to its continuation.

Another area where UNHCR's role requires further discussion and elaboration pertains to mixed migratory flows. With Globalization, we witness more and more situations of mixed migratory flows. We must develop capacities to differentiate refugees from economic migrants so as to better address their protection needs.

Mr. Chairman,

The search for durable solutions to various refugee situations must be intensified. Here, our preference remains for voluntary repatriation. We have seen application of the 4Rs approach of Repatriation, Reintegration, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction in some countries, with positive results. We support extending its application to other programmes. It is also important to ensure timely implementation of rehabilitation and reconstruction initiatives to ensure the sustainability of the reintegration of those who have been repatriated. The protection of refugees must be seen in the larger socio-economic context in which it occurs and in the light of some of the basic causes that are responsible for generating mass displacement, particularly extreme poverty and lack of adequate resources for economic and social development.

The High Commissioner's report outlines measures taken by UNHCR for strengthening implementation of the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol. These instruments are indeed the cornerstone of the international refugee protection regime. They were, however, adopted in the specific context of conditions in post World War II Europe. These instruments do not cover a number of issues that are of significance today, particularly the phenomenon of massive refugee flows and mixed migration.

Mr. Chairman,

India's commitment to humanitarian issues is second to none. We host a large number of refugees. Our protection regime is based on the fundamental

rights guaranteed by the Indian Constitution and is superior to that in many developed countries. Our efforts in this area have been widely recognised and appreciated, most recently by the Goodwill Ambassador of the UNHCR Ms. Angelina Jolie. We will continue to work in concert with the international community to address the new and emerging challenges to the international protection agenda.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, we support the High Commissioner's efforts for structural and management reforms, which are aimed at making the organization more flexible, effective and result-oriented. In particular, we welcome his efforts to reduce staff costs which will release much-needed funds to support operations. We also believe that the ongoing efforts to enhance the accountability and transparency in UNHCR's working methods must be continued. The organisation must preserve its impartiality in operations as well as its non-political character and work in close cooperation with the concerned States in achieving its goals.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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