

**No.GEN/PMI/UNHCR/2012
Permanent Mission of India
Geneva**

54th Meeting of the Standing Committee of the UNHCR

Statement by India

(26 June 2012)

Mr. Chairperson,

We thank the UN High Commissioner for Refugees for the excellent arrangement for paperless system of referral documentation for the meeting. We express appreciation to the Assistant High Commissioner for Refugees on the exhaustive “Note on international protection”, and also appreciate the papers on “Progress report on resettlement”, “international protection of children of concern including education”, “Age, gender and diversity (AGD) approach”, “Update on budgets and funding for 2011 and 2012” and “HIV/AIDS and refugees”. We also take this opportunity to convey our condolences to the UN staff, as well as members of the implementing partners of UNHCR, who tragically lost their lives while performing their duties, this year. Our statement is on the note on international protection as well the other agenda items linked to it.

2. India concurs with the assertion in the note on international protection, about the dramatic events that swept across the Middle East and various parts of Africa in 2011 and 2012 causing thousands of persons to seek sanctuary. We have also noted with concern, the combined adverse

effects of drought and conflict that has led to large scale refugee movement from Somalia into neighbouring States of Kenya and Ethiopia and displaced hundreds of thousands of persons inside the country. We have also noted the situation in Mali that has created approx. 146,000 refugees and significant displacement of persons within the country. We commend the deep commitment of the High Commissioner, and his dedicated team of officers in UNHCR, in continuing to work tirelessly for implementing the core agenda of UNHCR, that of protection of refugees. We remain committed to cooperating with UNHCR to strengthen its capacities for protection.

3. As highlighted in the note on international protection, we believe that the principle of non-refoulement is pivotal to the safety and security of the international protection system for the well-being of refugees. While we recognize the political complexities that limit the implementation of voluntary return in many cases, as States, we need to recognize that voluntary return remains the primary option for refugees and therefore, have a responsibility, through bilateral and regional, political dialogue amongst ourselves, towards reassuring the refugees of safe and stable return to their countries of origin. We would therefore like to urge caution, in allowing issues relating to asylum and migration to intersect.

4. Furthermore, we reiterate the need to ensure respect for States primary responsibility in fulfilling its obligations towards ensuring the rights and well-being of the internally displaced persons. Any action by another State or an international organization can only be upon the explicit request of the State concerned or unless the State is manifestly unwilling or unable to discharge its responsibility towards its people.

5. While we express appreciation at the progress report on resettlement, we wish to endorse UNHCR's advocacy of the approach of repatriation, reintegration, rehabilitation and reconstruction to bring together humanitarian and development actors and funds to ensure allocation of greater resources for a conducive environment for sustainable repatriation and returns.

6. With regard to the paper on international protection of children of concern including education and have noted the proposed child protection framework and education strategy. As States are primarily responsible for protection of children within their jurisdiction, the education strategy would necessarily need to be in harmony with the States national education policies in order to be successful and effective.

7. In case of the age, gender and diversity approach, we would urge greater coordination with the authorities and mechanisms of the State for a more clear outcome towards enabling the efficient discharge of UNHCR's core responsibilities, that of refugees.

8. We wish to place on record our satisfaction at the continuing progress on improved accountability, financial and programme controls, within UNHCR. We would like greater details on the progress report on the establishment of an Independent Audit and Oversight Committee, including the progress report on its activities since the recruitment/appointment of the Committee Members. We have noted the increasing expenditure (pages 3 & 4 of the paper on budgets and funding for 2011 and 2012) on IDPs which is

around 20% of the total budget. While we realized that the UNHCR's commitment to the IDPs (based on a State's explicit request) would lead to better coordination and collaboration as well as efficient and effective use of scarce resources, we would like to underline that is the refugees which have the first charge on the UNHCR's mandate. We feel that UNHCR's involvement with IDPs should be calibrated with defined role, responsibilities and pooling of resources by the participating organizations and the State concerned. In this context, we would urge caution in mainstreaming of the budget (Pillar 4) on IDP programmes in the Programme and Budget to ensure a firewall between the IDPs and the refugee related operational programmes.

9. With regard to HIV/AIDS and refugees, while we welcome UNHCR's advocacy for inclusion of refugees in the National HIV strategic plans and programmes, such advocacy should also highlight preventive/prophylactic measures being taken by States. We reiterate our commitment to cooperating with States and UNHCR, through productive dialogue and implementation of programmes for benefit of refugees. We look forward to a fruitful outcome of the deliberations of the Standing Committee.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.
