

63rd Session of the Executive Committee of the UNHCR

Statement by India

(1-5 October, 2012)

Mr. Chairperson,

We thank the High Commissioner for his informative opening statement. We felicitate the able and dedicated management of the UNHCR in managing the international protection challenges in Syria, in the Sahel Region, in Sudan compounded by an insecure and unpredictable operating environment and shrinking resources.

2. We also express appreciation to the UNHCR for the comprehensive documentation provided electronically for the 63rd Executive Committee and the continued efforts towards paperless meetings.

3. We are also happy to note the increase in membership of the Executive Committee to 87 members with the participation of Azerbaijan and Rwanda and look forward to cooperating with them in the ExCom deliberations.

4. We concur with the High Commissioner regarding the increasing demands on UNHCR due to the multiplication of new crises including the continuation of existing protracted refugee situations. To this end the central role of the States for implementing humanitarian activities cannot be over-emphasized. As States are accountable to their people, it is self-evident that the consent and cooperation of States are necessary for effective discharge of the core mandate of UNHCR, that of protection of refugees. While recognizing the

ongoing political complexities, States and UNHCR must remember that voluntary return should be the primary option for refugees. This is our core responsibility to reassure the refugees of safe and stable return to their countries of origin. The fact that this is the primary option for refugees, is borne out by the statistics provided by the UNHCR in its document Revised Biennial Programme Budget 2012-2013 where this trend for voluntary return is reflected as the highest statistics in all regions.

5. We commend the revised document on the Biennial Programme Budget of 2012-2013, that has been significantly revised in terms of presentation and facts following the discussions at the 55th Standing Committee. It is well-written, comprehensive and comprehensible. However, in the context of supporting States in the Asia-Pacific region to manage mixed migration flows with protection sensitive responses, we would urge caution in allowing issues relating to asylum and migration to intersect as the apprehensions of one are likely to be transposed on the other. Similarly, in the times of global recession and financial crisis, it is of concern that expenses on public information and media projects under the Global Programmes Budget for 2012-2013 make up more than 70% of the total budget instead of focusing on expenditure on the core mandate of protection of refugees. Details and clarifications on Special Staff Costs that make up around 20% of the Programme Support of the Global Programmes Budget would have also been helpful.

6. We note the recent attempts towards changing the Humanitarian Law including the international protection framework, for example, through the implementation of the Transformative Agenda. We would urge that such attempts reinforce the paramount role of States in international protection and

that international law does not permit those guilty of terrorist and criminal acts to abuse the asylum systems or the international protection framework and the need to strengthen States' institutions and operating through them instead of by-passing them. To this end there must be increased focus on States and UNHCR's cooperation in terms of training and capacity-building, to strengthen States' delivery mechanisms.

7. We would wish to place on record our satisfaction at the continuing progress on improved accountability, financial and programme controls within UNHCR. We look forward to the Report of the Independent Audit and Oversight Committee at the next session of the Executive Committee and the implementation of the IPSAS mechanism in the UNHCR by then.

8. Government of India continues to refine its legal and administrative mechanisms for providing greater hospitality to refugees including earning a livelihood in India during their stay. At the same time, there is need for UNHCR and the international community to pay more attention to the broader context of conditions of poverty and deprivation, in which refugee movements, largely in the developing countries, have and continue to take place.

9. Finally, we reiterate our commitment to cooperating with States and UNHCR, through productive dialogue and implementation of programmes for the benefit of refugees. We look forward to a fruitful outcome of the deliberations of the 63rd Executive Committee.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.
