

STATEMENT BY MR ARVIND KUIMAR SINGH, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT &
MEMBER OF THE INDIAN DELEGATION, ON AGENDA ITEM 62 – “REPORT OF
THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES, QUESTIONS
RELATING TO REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS AND
HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS” AT THE THIRD COMMITTEE OF THE 68TH
SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON
NOVEMBER 06, 2013

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation would like to thank the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for his report, as well as his presentation before this Committee.

His report highlights the central challenges being faced by the UNHCR and the organization’s efforts to address them. We acknowledge the commitment of the High Commissioner and his staff in their tireless efforts to implement the core agenda of UNHCR - that of protection of refugees in the most trying and difficult circumstances. We also pay tribute to UNHCR staff, who lost their lives in the line of duty.

Mr. Chairman,

Over the past one year, we have witnessed significant deterioration of crisis situations in many countries. As the High Commissioner’s report mentions, more than 1.1 million people fled their countries of origin. A large number of these people are hosted by developing countries who continue to meet their humanitarian obligations, often risking their delicate economies.

In our common pursuit to find more durable solutions, it is important to develop a better understanding of the underlying reasons that would help formulate more comprehensive policies for early return and reintegration of refugees into their home country.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation shares the High Commissioner’s concern regarding the situation of protracted refugees. While we address emerging crises situations, it is important not to lose sight of the protracted refugee situations. There is an imperative to create conditions for voluntary repatriation, which is the most durable solution to such problem.

While we recognize the political complexities that limit the implementation of voluntary return in many cases, bilateral and regional dialogues amongst countries involved is necessary to reassure the refugees of safe and stable return to their countries of origin. To this end, developing countries of origin should also be assisted to create economic opportunities for returning refugees.

Mr. Chairman,

It is a well recognized fact that the challenges posed by internal displacement is well beyond the capacity of any single organization to handle. It was reassuring to note in the report on Strategic Review of UNHCR that primary responsibility for internally displaced lies with States. The UNHCR's involvement, therefore, can only complement the efforts of national authorities and cannot substitute them.

We would, once again, underline that UNHCR's involvement in IDPs should only be with the concurrence of national authorities. Further, such involvement should be based on due consideration of its mandate, modality of intervention, availability of resources and careful examination of all implications before mainstreaming such activities.

Mr. Chairman,

In our discourse, we need to guard against the intersection of the two constituencies of migrants and refugees. The concerns about one should not be transposed on the other.

International migration needs to be promoted in a regular non-discriminatory and orderly manner as migrants add value in economic terms both to the destination as well as sending States.

UNHCR must, therefore, develop capacities to maintain a clear distinction between refugees and economic migrants so as to better address the protection needs of the former.

Mr. Chairman,

We have also taken note of the first written report of the Independent Audit and Oversight Committee (IAOC) 2012-2013. The report has recommended the creation of two operational units – (i) an internal audit unit, and (ii) an investigating unit. We see merit in establishing a unified internal oversight service with distinct audit and investigation components.

We thank the External Auditors for their incisive observations on various financial and other related aspects of UNHCR activities. We are confident that UNHCR will closely implement various recommendations, and where there are constraints in implementing any recommendation, it should be brought to the attention of members.

Mr. Chairman,

India's record in dealing with refugees has been no less than exemplary. India stands steadfast in its commitment to provide humanitarian assistance to them. We continue to host a large number of refugees and our programmes for them are managed entirely from within our own resources. Our protection regime is based on the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Indian Constitution and other relevant

legal provisions. We have clearly demonstrated our abiding commitment to the principles of protection and *non-refoulement*.

The decision to grant all UNHCR mandate refugees in urban areas the opportunity to apply for long stay visas of a one year renewable duration augments the protection space considerably. These long stay visas allow refugees to work in the private sector and enrol in any academic institutions. India continues to refine its administrative mechanisms for providing greater hospitality to refugees during their stay in the country.

Mr. Chairman,

India remains firmly committed to working in concert with the UNHCR and the international community to address the international protection agenda for refugees in a spirit of solidarity and find comprehensive practical solutions.

Thank you.

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