

STATEMENT BY MR. B.K. HARIPRASAD, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT AND MEMBER OF THE INDIAN DELEGATION, ON AGENDA ITEM 41 – 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 64TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON NOVEMBER 03, 2009



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.

Mr. Chairman,

Refugees and stateless persons are a particularly vulnerable group. Having been forced to leave the country of their nationality or origin, they have little choice but to rely on the hospitality of the country where they have sought refuge. It is particularly important that the international community remain cognizant of the plight of such groups and be prepared to extend all help that can be offered to allow such groups to live a life with at-least a minimum modicum of dignity.

In this context, we appreciate the work done by the UNHCR in fulfillment of its mandate, including its efforts to strengthen capacities for both protection and quick response in emergency situations.

At the same time, we remain concerned at protracted refugee situations, and the increasingly challenging environment in which not only are the numbers of those seeking refuge and protection rising but that the UNHCR has been unable to adequately access the very people it is supposed to protect in several situations.

A major factor in this regard has been the role of non-state actors in situations of armed conflict, who have prevented humanitarian assistance from reaching the victims of conflict and those seeking refuge and protection. It is important that the international community squarely addresses the issue of bringing these non-state actors to respect the humanitarian framework and machinery.

It is equally important that the determination of refugee status should conform strictly to UNHCR's mandate to ensure that those guilty of terrorist and criminal acts do not abuse the national asylum systems and the international protection regime.

Mr. Chairman,

The primary responsibility to look after the internally displaced populations (IDPs) lies with national authorities. It is, therefore, important that UNHCR's involvement in IDPs should only be with the concurrence of national authorities, and, only if the situation is one of a collapse of national authority then in conformity with the conditions approved by the UN General Assembly.

Further, such involvement should be based on due consideration of UNHCR's mandate, modality of intervention, availability of resources and after a careful examination of all the implications.

Mr. Chairman,

India is not a signatory to the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees as we believe that the Convention is limited in scope and does not address issues related to massive

migration and mixed refugee flows. However, we have always respected international principles pertaining to refugees and India is second to none in upholding non-refoulement.

The Indian civilization and heritage has an underlying pluralist and tolerant character that has been receptive to and has hosted, diverse streams of migration over thousands of years.

India shouldered two of the biggest exodus of populations in modern history – one related to the partition of India in 1947 and the other during the liberation struggle of Bangladesh in 1971.

Even today we are host to some of the largest refugee populations in the world. And, we have cared for them from our own resources while affording these refugees full protection under our laws.

We have also successfully managed repatriation of a large number of refugees to their countries of origin through bilateral arrangements without any multilateral assistance.

Mr. Chairman,

India remains committed to working in concert with UNHCR and the international community to address the present and emerging challenges to the international protection agenda in a spirit of solidarity. We respect the efforts of the UNHCR staff in their noble mission, often in dangerous situations, and assure them of our continuing cooperation.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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