

69th Session of the Executive Committee of UNHCR

**Statement by
H.E. Ambassador Farukh Amil,
Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the UN and other
International Organizations
(02 October, 2018)**

**Madam Chairperson,
High Commissioner Grandi,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,**

The unprecedented humanitarian challenges accruing from large scale displacements of populations warrant greater commitment of the international community to address the plight of people on the move. The current session of the Executive Committee of the UNHCR is an occasion to demonstrate such a commitment. We hope that our discussions will yield positive results for the refugees and the host communities. Pakistan delegation is optimistic for productive deliberations.

2. Our delegation also wishes to acknowledge the services of High Commissioner Filippo Grandi and his team at the UNHCR for the dedication and hard work. High Commissioner Grandi was in Pakistan last month, as part of our regular exchange to work out a safe and voluntary return of all refugees from Pakistan. We encourage the UNHCR to continue efforts with donor community for redressal of our grievances.

Excellencies/Delegates,

3. Pakistan has always been a generous host to the refugee communities. We are proud of our historic role, experience and continuing commitment to the cause of refugees. From Polish refugees in late 40s, Burmese and Bengali refugees in the 70s and so Bosnian refugees in early 90s, Pakistan has always opened its borders to people seeking protection, irrespective of ethnicity, creed or religion. Pakistan can truly claim to have “big heart” for people fleeing their homes due to wars and conflicts.

4. As host of the largest refugee population of 5 million at its peak and about recorded 2.8 million at present, although the actual number is far

greater, we have lived through multiple crises and challenges associated with large influx of Afghan refugees over the last four decades. The people of Pakistan have welcomed Afghan refugees with open arms. While our resources may have been modest, the hospitality was spontaneous and sustained.

5. Pakistan's handling of Afghan refugees in the last four decades can be a casebook of ideal refugee management. With fewer restrictions, Afghan refugees enjoyed social mobility, employment opportunities and access to health and education. In these four decades, hundreds of thousands of refugee children have enjoyed full access to public and private educational institutions in Pakistan. It is an investment into building the human capital of the future generations of Afghans. It is, therefore, not incidental that many successful individuals from all fields in Afghanistan have at some point been a refugee in Pakistan.

Madam Chairperson,

6. Human sentiments of compassion and hospitality can be infinite. But the resources available with us can be limited. The international community has an abiding responsibility to assist the refugee hosting countries in accordance with its own responsibility. The international community must provide UNHCR with additional resources to expand contribution to the education and health sector for Afghan refugees in Pakistan.

7. The Solution Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR) is a useful framework to garner support. We reiterate our commitment to its pillars, on the voluntary repatriation, sustainable reintegration in Afghanistan and support to the host countries.

8. We remain committed to the repatriation of Afghan refugees in safety and dignity. This would require significant actions by UNHCR to step up and sustain the repatriation, as well as creation of pull factors and conditions conducive for sustainable return and re-integration. Till then, adequate and concrete steps will be ensured to facilitate Afghan refugees living in Pakistan. I am happy to inform that Government has extended the stay of registered Afghan nationals till June 2019.

9. Pakistan has mainstreamed the protection and respect of their human rights in our management of Afghan refugees. It is in this spirit that an extensive exercise of registration of undocumented Afghans have been carried out during last year. As a result, the figure of registered Afghan nationals in Pakistan stands at around 900,000. The Afghan Citizen Cards

(ACCs) help regularizing their stay in Pakistan. This comprehensive project had been initiated and funded by the Government of Pakistan. According to our estimates, approximately 0.5 million Afghan nationals in Pakistan still remain undocumented. It is pertinent to mention that 1.4 million Afghan nationals were already registered, and hold Proof of Registration (PoR) Cards.

10. This year has not seen encouraging repatriation trends. I must remind that, in 2016, enhancement of repatriation grant from US \$ 200 to US \$ 400 was instrumental in large number of repatriations and re-settlement of returnees. This option should be reconsidered by UNHCR.

11. Efficient and effective management of our international border with Afghanistan is critical to the handling of Afghan refugees. Measures for proper documentation at entry exit points block illegal to and fro movements, thereby, contributing to improved governance. We look forward to support of the international community and cooperation from the Government of Afghanistan in our border control at Pakistan-Afghanistan border.

Madam Chairperson,

12. Pakistan has always supported and shall continue to support all efforts to promote peace, stability and prosperity in Afghanistan. We realize that only a secure and stable Afghanistan can absorb all of these refugees in Pakistan. We, therefore, further support an Afghan-led and Afghan owned peace and reconciliation process in Afghanistan.

13. Despite strains on our state and society by massive refugee population not a single political party or group ever use anti-refugee sentiment as populist sloganeering. This is a tribute to our society and politics. This is in sharp contrast to some recent trends where citizenship of some communities is being revoked based on ethnic consideration.

Excellencies/Delegates,

14. Pakistan remained positively engaged with the processes related to the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) and Global Compact on Migration (GCM). The conclusion of our discussions under GCR and GCM reflects a compromise and common middle ground in the wake of varying interests and priorities. We appreciate UNHCR's efforts to finalize the GCR. Implementation of the promises made, and fulfillment of expectations would be a measure of success of the ability of the UNHCR to make good on the globally established principle of burden and responsibility sharing. We

are looking forward to the follow-up process and to see how the proposal of “additional development resources over and above regular development programme” would unfold. The refugees of the world pin high hopes from the improved financial prospects and political support for easing their sufferings.

15. The future burden sharing arrangements should aim at finding durable solutions and uprooting the causes of refugee situations. Unfortunately, we have observed lack of adequate, equitable, predictable and flexible burden sharing and financing for the refugee situations.

16. International community has been striving to find innovative financial instruments, however, the refugee hosting countries, around 85 % of whom happen to be developing countries, are faced with their own financial and economic constraints. They would not want to be burdened further with additional loans.

17. We should not ignore the vital imperative of lasting solutions to conflicts that lead to exodus of refugees at first place. We should make a recourse to the Charter of the United Nations and the tenants of international law that are equipped with provisions and processes for settlement of such disputes and conflicts.

18. We call upon the UNCHR to continue its efforts to measure the impact arising from hosting, protecting and assisting refugees with a view to assessing gaps in international cooperation and find solutions.

Madam Chairperson,

19. We conclude by thanking you, the members of the Bureau and the staff of UNHCR with collaborative engagement and mutual support. I am certain that we can accomplish our shared objectives of improving the conditions of refugees, working for their safe returns and assistance of host communities.

I thank you.