

**Talking points for the Director, CASWANAME Bureau  
Mr. Ekber Menemencioglu**

**High Commissioner's Forum**

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- **Afghanistan would seem to be among the most difficult of an already complex set of challenges that fall within the scope of Convention Plus. My presentation will therefore address three points:**

**Firstly, the linkage between Convention Plus and Afghanistan**

**Secondly, UNHCR's analysis and response to the situation**

**Thirdly, the points of convergence between our action on the Afghanistan situation and the Convention Plus process**

***What are the linkages between the Convention Plus process and Afghanistan ?***

- **The Assistant High Commissioner's intervention offered some helpful indicators for protracted refugee situations. The Afghanistan context reflects not only his description but has some additional – and sobering - characteristics all its own.**
  - **multiple refugee outflows stretching over quarter of a century**
  - **high levels of internal displacement**
  - **secondary movements beyond the region to dozens of countries around the the world.**
- **Since 2002 almost 3 million Afghans have returned to their homes from outside and within Afghanistan. This has been a**

source of great satisfaction and reassurance that solutions can be found.

- **But the estimated 3 million displaced that remain is a strong reminder of the complexities of the challenge Afghanistan still faces. And, I should add, of the consequences for us all if we leave protracted situations unattended.**
- **UNHCR alone will not be able to bring closure to this situation. We are convinced that it will require continuing and even intensified cooperation at different levels – international, regional, and bilateral - if progress is to be made. For that reason, we believe that a more comprehensive approach that is designed to address the many different facets of displacement from Afghanistan must be crafted.**

*Let me turn to how we see the situation now and in the future.*

- **After the huge returns of the last two years, there were perhaps good reasons for assuming that we would soon be able to close this long chapter. However, previous experience and analysis suggested other wise.**
- **We have supported large repatriations to Afghanistan in the past. But political instability and insecurity prevented a reconstruction and development process from taking root in a country whose development indicators had always been among the lowest in the world. Today, the huge tasks of state-building, of bringing political stability and security, and of encouraging robust economic and social development are even more vital to sustaining return and reintegration.**
- **Moreover, over the years population movements in both directions across the country's borders have evolved. There have been significant social and economic changes including a whole generation of Afghans that have grown up outside their country. These reflect the power of human resilience to recover and adapt under adverse circumstances. But they also pose new challenges that have grown more apparent over time.**

- **For UNHCR it is clear that the nature of the situation we face is no longer the same as it was twenty five years or even ten years ago. Our overall analysis is spelled out in the Discussion Paper “Towards Comprehensive solutions for displacement from Afghanistan” that we shared with you last year.**
- **Solutions must still be found for refugees; international protection is still required. However, for those Afghans who wish to return but for whom poverty and social exclusion rather than political persecution are the main obstacles; for those who are coming and going across the border for economic and social reasons; and for those who have found productive and legitimate livelihoods, our view is that we must examine other arrangements.**
- **For that reason, we took the decision last year to launch an initiative aimed at addressing these new challenges. Both here in Geneva, and in the field, we are orienting ourselves, our strategy, and our programmes to take up this comprehensive solutions process for Afghanistan.**
- **I appreciate the strong expressions of support that we have already received for the establishment of the small unit within CASWANAME to guide this process.**
- **As I have indicated previously, its task is to encourage development and agreement on the components of a new policy and solutions framework that we believe must be put in place to manage and resolve the different aspects of the challenges we now face – in Afghanistan and in the asylum countries.**
- **In the coming months, we expect to intensify and deepen our work and our consultations with the governments in the region, with donors, and with cooperation agencies on:**
  - **how to sustain return and reintegration,**
  - **how to find workable arrangements for migratory movements,**
  - **how to alleviate displacement related problems in the neighbouring countries,**

**and last but not least**

**- how to identify those that will be in continued need of international protection.**

*Let me conclude here with a few final remarks.*

- **From the above, it will be evident that there is a clear synergy between the Convention Plus process and what we are seeking to achieve in the context of Afghanistan.**
  - **international commitment to support a more comprehensive solutions framework within which the different aspects of a protracted and complex refugee and displacement situation can be managed;**
  - **providing greater predictability to the development of policies for the new challenges that have emerged;**
  - **continued emphasis and increased resources for mainstreaming reintegration issues systematically into reconstruction and development programmes in Afghanistan to sustain the momentum of repatriation;**

*and lastly,*

- **the encouragement of development and technical cooperation approaches to displacement related solutions and problems - poverty, social exclusion, and environmental damage – that especially the neighbouring asylum countries have borne so patiently for so – but for which humanitarian assistance cannot offer solutions.**

*Thank you.*