



**Statement by
UNHCR
at the General Segment of the 10th session of the United Nations
Human Rights Council**

4 March 2009

Mr. President,

The effective protection of forcibly displaced persons is inextricably linked to human rights. Indeed, international refugee law is only a species of human rights law.

UNHCR pursues a rights-based approach to the protection of persons for whom it has a mandate: asylum-seekers, refugees, forcibly displaced IDPs, returnees and the stateless. It strongly supports such an approach for populations for which it does not have a direct mandate, such as migrants, who are frequently intermingled with refugees and asylum-seekers and suffer many of the same abuses.

As a highly operational organization, UNHCR helps many of the world's most oppressed people realize their rights. Not just to asylum, but to the things that make asylum worth having: housing, clean water, food, health care and education. It does so with unfailing adherence to the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality.

UNHCR looks to the Human Rights Council for support in mainstreaming human rights into our organization and work. To be effective, this requires that resolutions and decisions adopted by the Council, and recommendations stemming from the UPR, systematically reaffirm the universal applicability of human rights standards to all persons, including non-citizens. It also requires that the 'displacement' or 'statelessness angle' to the full and equal enjoyment of human rights is consistently reflected in Council reports and recommendations. For instance, we would like to see States' compliance with the rights to asylum, return and nationality set out in the UDHR systematically examined and reported. With respect to protracted refugee situations, we would urge the Human Rights Council to highlight these 'forgotten' situations by including them in universal periodic reviews.

UNHCR stands ready to contribute with our experience and expertise to ensure that the Council's work remains relevant to the protection of persons of UNHCR's concern.

UNHCR can also offer practical cooperation in areas where protection gaps remain evident. UNHCR shares the belief of the Advisory Committee that a detailed examination of the existing legal regime in respect of persons fleeing hunger is desirable in order to identify potential gaps, and would be willing to participate in

such a study. Similarly, in respect of issues within our mandates, UNHCR is ready to provide technical assistance to States in implementing UPR recommendations.

We would finally encourage an increased role by the Council in early warning – in preventing situations of displacement and statelessness from coming about.

If UNHCR continues integrating human rights into all areas of our work, and the Council continues integrating persons and, to us, relevant humanitarian issues into the human rights arena, then we have a strong foundation for protection and solutions which ensure full respect for the rights of those who are some of the primary victims of human rights violations.

Thank you Mr. President this opportunity to address the Council.