

Joint Communiqué

of the International Conference on the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees to Support Voluntary Repatriation, Sustainable Reintegration and Assistance to Host Countries

3 May 2012

1) The Islamic Republic of Iran and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan have hosted millions of Afghan refugees for more than three decades. During the last 10 years, over 5.7 million Afghan refugees have returned to Afghanistan, constituting nearly a quarter of the current Afghan population. There are still approximately three million registered Afghan refugees in neighboring Pakistan (nearly two million) and Iran (nearly one million), making this one of the largest protracted refugee situations in the world. This situation requires continued efforts to facilitate voluntary repatriation and support to reintegration in Afghanistan.

2) The Governments of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, with the support of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), have embarked on a quadripartite consultation process, resulting in the development of the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees to Support Voluntary Repatriation, Sustainable Reintegration and Assistance to Host Countries", hereinafter referred to as the "Solutions Strategy", and organizing this international conference.

3) On 2 and 3 May 2012, the International Conference on the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees to Support Voluntary Repatriation, Sustainable Reintegration and Assistance to Host Countries was held in Geneva, co-hosted by the Government of Switzerland and UNHCR.

4) The Conference participants welcomed and supported the Solutions Strategy as an integrated framework for multilateral cooperation and coordination.

5) The Conference participants recognized that the implementation of the three pillars of this strategy, namely the continued support to voluntary repatriation, investment in sustainable reintegration in Afghanistan and assistance to host countries, will require the coordinated engagement of humanitarian and development actors and Governments concerned, underpinned by a commitment to sustained and tangible support by the international community.

6) In a number of recent international and regional conferences and meetings on Afghanistan, such as the Istanbul Conference, the facilitation of the voluntary and dignified repatriation of Afghan refugees has been reaffirmed. In these Conferences, the international community reaffirmed its commitment to a stable and prosperous Afghanistan. In this context, the Conference participants recognized that the continued voluntary return and sustainable reintegration of the Afghan refugee population is one of the important elements to the overall stability and sustainable development of Afghanistan.

7) The Conference participants recognized the need to enhance the development and reintegration potential of high return communities in Afghanistan, particularly in the sectors of livelihood, basic services and shelter, in order to create communities that are viable in the long-term, which will help returnees remain in Afghanistan and support the increased return of refugees from the host

countries. These efforts should also help to reduce the pressure on Afghans to leave the country in search of livelihood opportunities.

8) The Conference participants recognized the central importance of bridging the gap between humanitarian assistance and sustainable development and welcomed the enhanced coordination and partnerships that are being created within the framework of the Solutions Strategy. The Conference participants also recognized the need to coordinate development and humanitarian assistance and channel development resources to support the implementation of this strategy.

9) The Conference participants recognized the continued economic and social costs as well as the environmental impact on Iran and Pakistan by this protracted situation and reaffirmed the importance of international burden-sharing. The Conference participants appreciated the generous contribution of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in hosting millions of Afghan refugees over the past three decades. In the spirit of burden-sharing the international community reaffirmed its commitment to support the humanitarian needs of Afghan refugees and affected host communities in these countries.

10) The Conference participants reaffirmed their respect for the voluntary nature of refugee repatriation.

11) The Conference participants further highlighted the importance of the quadripartite consultative process that led to the development of the Solutions Strategy and expressed their full support for the continuance of this process through the Quadripartite Steering Committee that will guide the implementation of the Solutions Strategy.

12) Finally, the Conference participants acknowledged the positive role played by UNHCR and its partners in addressing the Afghan refugee situation and the support provided by the international community. The Conference participants also recognized the need to work with UNHCR and the UN system to resolve the protracted Afghan refugee situation.