**Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme**
**Standing Committee 55th Meeting**
**"Human Resource Issues, including Staff Security"**

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**Statement of Mr. Amin Awad,**
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Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

- 2012 has continued to pose daunting challenges for humanitarian workers operating in insecure environments. In complex emergencies in the Horn, West Africa, North Africa and the Middle East, a range of threats - including exposure to armed conflict, improvised explosive devices and abduction of staff - have greatly challenged the delivery of protection and assistance to those in need.

- Regrettably, UNHCR lost two national staff members in the first half of 2012. One was killed in April in a conflict-affected area of Damascus, the Syrian Arab Republic, and another was critically injured during a robbery attempt in his residence in Goma, the Democratic Republic of Congo, in May, and later died from the injuries.

- While these incidents are not believed to be related to the victims' work with UNHCR, they serve as a stark reminder that even with the

appropriate support structures, training and information sharing, staff remain vulnerable.

- It's against this backdrop that I would like to update you on the achievements made and the efforts under way to reach the objectives of the UNHCR's Security Management Plan of Action, first presented to the Standing Committee in June 2010. With the overall aim of reorienting UNHCR towards a more analytical, "how to stay"-approach to staff safety, my presentation will provide you with an update on the progress made in the implementation of this plan within four key areas: 1) **field support and analysis,** 2) **oversight and headquarters processes,** 3) **coordination and policy development**, and 4) **training**.

## 1. FIELD SUPPORT AND ANALYSIS

- Firstly, with regards to **field support and analysis,** 2011 was a high-tempo year, and 2012 has seen no letup in the need for this support function. As one indication of this, UNHCR's Field Safety Section, which provides guidance and support to field operations in managing threats and risks to staff, has to date in 2012 conducted more support missions to the field than in the whole of 2011. This increase is in part due to the reorganization of the Field Safety Section, which has defined thematic and geographical focal points and thereby allowed for more

sustained and responsive support to field operations. However, it is equally a testament of the continued prevalence of security concerns to UNHCR operations around the world.

- In order to meet the security needs in the field, UNHCR has recruited seven additional Field Safety Advisors in 2012. This brings the total number of Field Safety Advisors recruited over the past three years to 27, representing nearly half of UNHCR's total workforce of 57 security professionals. This is a significant step towards the goal of renewing UNHCR's security workforce, with the aim of developing a profile of FSAs with greater analytical capacity and communications skills to apply the technical expertise toward the safety of both staff and persons of concern.

## 2. OVERSIGHT AND HEADQUARTERS PROCESSES

- Secondly, we have placed renewed emphasis on **<u>headquarters oversight processes</u>** to ensure that security measures are not only *sufficient* but also *cost efficient*, to maximally utilize limited resources.  In order to achieve this, the principle mechanism continues to be the Security Steering Committee meetings, chaired by the High Commissioner or the Assistant High Commissioner for Operations, which are used to evaluate security posture and preparedness of the most affected field operations.

- Another important measure is the Annual Programme Review. During the 2012 review process, the Field Safety Section reviewed the submissions of each and every country operation to validate that security measures proposed were both cost-effective and appropriate for the context.

- Finally, UNHCR is presently undergoing an audit by the United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services on security funding and resource utilization. The audit is timely, given the increasing security costs faced by UNHCR through its contributions to the jointly-funded activities of the UN's Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS), and the inter-agency cost sharing arrangements in the field. We expect the audit to yield further constructive recommendations for UNHCR to continue to manage its security resources as efficiently as possible.

## 3. COORDINATION AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT

- Thirdly, in light of ongoing changes in the UN security management system, **coordination and policy development** has been an important theme in 2012. As UNDSS works to implement the "finding ways to stay" approach, UNHCR continues to participate actively in the inter-agency security management framework to influence policy and ensure that it supports the agency's ability to reach populations of concern.

- In May 2012, the High Commissioner issued a revised UNHCR Security Management Policy, updated to align the organization with the UN Security Management System Framework for Accountability published last year, as well as UNHCR's Global Management Accountability Framework. The document is now the cornerstone of UNHCR's security policies and outlines the organization's approach to managing security risks in the field, as well as security accountabilities of staff at all levels.

## 4. TRAINING

- Fourthly, and most significant in terms of long term capacity building, UNHCR continues its **comprehensive training strategy** aimed at strengthening the culture of security. The Global Learning Center, in coordination with the Field Safety Section, continues its unique security risk management training for managers, with trainings conducted in Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Georgia and Greece so far in 2012, and planned for Pakistan, Uganda and Myanmar later this year. To date, over 600 managers have been trained in risk management practices, resulting in a substantial improvement in the organization's ability to continue operating safely in places where the urgency of needs and attendant risks to staff are both considerable.

- In line with the strategy of developing an FSA workforce suited to UNHCR's needs, UNHCR has organized a workshop for Field Safety Advisers on the safety and security of persons of concern. This training constituted part of the rollout of the *Manual on Security of Persons of Concern*, released last year, and was designed to strengthen the cooperation between security, protection, community services and other staff in finding solutions to ensure the safety of persons of concern.

- Noting that drivers account for only 12% of UNHCR's workforce, but are involved in more than 30% of deadly incidents, driver training continues to be a priority. In 2012, a goal was set to train drivers in the highest risk operations, particularly focusing on armored vehicle and defensive driving. To date in 2012, 69 drivers have been trained in five countries, with additional trainings scheduled on a continuing basis throughout this year and the next.

- Finally, in keeping with the policy of developing national staff capacity, specialized trainings were undertaken for national staff with security risk management responsibilities. This is particularly important as national staff take on increasingly greater roles in field safety and many other fields in the organization.

- Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates, the efforts I have outlined here today underscore our continued commitment to providing the highest level of safety and security for our staff and partners, as they in turn strive to safeguard the well-being of refugees, internally displaced persons and other persons of concern.

- The measures that are put in place and the culture of security that we are promulgating within the organization will better equip us to carry out our mandate to the benefit of all persons of our concern. We are grateful for your continued support to these efforts. Thank you.