

**Ministerial Meeting of the Bali Process
Bali, Indonesia, 23 March 2016**

Statement by Volker Türk, Assistant High Commissioner for Protection

Ministers, distinguished delegates,

Thank you for the opportunity to address this meeting on behalf of UNHCR.

This Ministerial Meeting of the Bali Process comes at a time when the number of refugees and people displaced as a result of conflict, violence, and serious human rights abuses has never been higher globally. Indeed, the world has changed fundamentally since the last Ministerial Meeting in April 2013.

We are confronted with massive movements of people seeking protection and safety both internally and externally from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, South Sudan, the Central African Republic, Nigeria, Somalia, and most recently Burundi, to name a few. Over 60 million people have lost their homes and livelihoods - their future in their home countries - primarily as a result of violent conflict. No country or region in the world is immune from the impacts, and these conflicts cannot be addressed in isolation.

It does not come as a surprise, therefore, that refugee and migration issues have attracted high levels of attention worldwide. On 19 September 2016, the UN General Assembly will hold a high-level plenary meeting on large movements of refugees and migrants, and on 20 September 2016, the United States President Obama will invite world leaders to a refugee summit. Next week, on 30 March, UNHCR is also convening a ministerial meeting in Geneva dedicated to identifying safe pathways for the admission of Syrian refugees, and we hope that many of you will offer concrete pledges. With 4.8 million Syrian refugees and 6.5 million displaced internally, their fate has become a global concern, requiring action in solidarity by everyone, including from the region represented here.

If there is one common theme underlying a solutions-oriented approach to the current magnitude, scope, and complexity of forced displacement, it is the need for predictable and equitable responsibility-sharing arrangements. There are also two lessons we have learned over the years: first, it is important to be prepared for the eventualities of population movements; and second, regional approaches are key, when properly crafted and implemented.

The Bali Process has proven its value over the years as one of the most important fora for advancing regional approaches, and we are encouraged by the realization that responses must be holistic. They need to cover border control, security aspects, and combating smuggling and trafficking. This will only work, however, if it goes hand-in-hand with a clear and unequivocal human security, and indeed, protection-of-people dimension, including for refugees. The Regional Cooperation Framework was an important starting point, and lately we have seen a series of meetings in response to the movements in the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea.

Unlike other regions in the world, there is hope in South East Asia that one country that has generated refugee flows in the past will now create the conditions for safe and dignified return for most of its citizens and long-term residents. There are huge expectations for the new Government in Myanmar, first and foremost from its own people, but also from those outside who care deeply for the well-being of the country and its population.

We hope very much that a tripartite agreement involving Thailand, Myanmar, and UNHCR will eventually pave the way for the voluntary repatriation of the Myanmar refugees along the Thai/Myanmar border. We also hope very much that the situation in Rakhine State will be stabilized satisfactorily for all residents on its territory, not least in an effort to address some of the drivers and root causes of displacement. In our

own experience, key steps would include recognition of an appropriate legal status for all residents, civil registration, access to identity documents, and removal of restrictions on basic freedoms facilitating access to livelihoods. A development-centred approach benefitting all populations is being proposed by the UN and also pursued by a number of countries. In this respect, the Sustainable Development Goals provide important guidance - development is best attained for everyone by leaving no one behind.

Compared to last year, we have so far not seen a resumption of major boat movements in the Indian Ocean for a variety of reasons. Yet it is important to be ready for this possible eventuality and to build on the body of experience we have gathered, including the many lessons learned from last year, not least as indicated by the Track II dialogue recommendation to enhance contingency planning. Search-and-rescue remains a life-saving priority as does ensuring that people can disembark at a place of safety.

Let us not forget that refugees represented half of the maritime movements in the region last year. For them, return home is not a possibility - at least not for now - and until then, temporary stay arrangements that enable people to get on with their lives have remained on the table as a pragmatic way forward, both for those who arrive by sea and for others who arrive by other means from further afield.

The provision of temporary stay arrangements for those in need of international protection is an existing practice in some States in the region on which to build. It is an approach that we would like to promote actively, especially when accompanied by access to health care, education, and the labour market. It not only stabilizes the lives of individuals and reduces onward movements, but it also prepares people for eventual return when conditions are conducive. Joint screening by UNHCR and the authorities of countries that have not signed the 1951 Refugee Convention would help implement such arrangements. Labour migration schemes for refugees would also help to meet countries' labour demands, improve labour standards, generate revenue, and eliminate criminal smuggling and trafficking networks.

It is against this background that we are hoping for a paradigm shift in the region - a win-win for everyone that recognizes both the relatively greater wealth, compared to the CPA days in the eighties, and fewer refugees in this region compared to the rest of the world. With the record number of refugees and most pressing resettlement needs elsewhere, we need to work hard on a new compact that finds creative ways to absorb people in need of international protection within the region, while pursuing resettlement for those most in need. Equally, we want to identify ways and means for governments in the region to enhance engagement with UNHCR in joint approaches to registration, determination of international protection needs, and finding solutions. We already have some encouraging indications from some governments in this regard.

The Bali process can play a most useful role in this endeavour. It offers the opportunity to explore different options and levels of engagement, and to convene, as necessary, all or part of its membership in response to emergencies or in developing longer-term strategies.

I can assure you, on behalf of the High Commissioner and all our colleagues working in the region, that we look forward to continued close cooperation with all of you in the region and beyond.

Thank you.