

**Permanent Mission of India**  
**Geneva**  
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**Statement by India at the General Debate of the 68<sup>th</sup> Session of the  
Executive Committee of the United Nations High Commissioner for  
Refugees programme**

*(Geneva, Switzerland, 02-06 October 2017)*

Madam Chair,

1. At the outset, we thank the High Commissioner for his forward-looking opening statement and for providing a strategic direction to UNHCR in line with the international commitments made in the 2016 New York Declaration. We support his appeal for a genuine sharing of burden and responsibility, not merely confined to resources, and in the spirit of international cooperation and solidarity.
2. We are witnessing in today's world, an unprecedented level of human mobility including that of refugees. Developing countries, host to 86 percent of world's refugees, are disproportionately affected and their capacities are severely stretched. The movement of refugees needs to be managed, in a humane and people-centered manner. This must take into account different national realities, capacities, existing contributions and levels of development and respect national policies and priorities. The States that receive large movements of refugees should be supported and their capacities strengthened.
3. The mandate of UNHCR is expanding and so are the gaps in humanitarian financing. This calls for more innovative ways of financing which should enable host countries and communities to respond both to the immediate humanitarian needs and to their longer-term development. In this regard, we welcome UNHCR's increasing engagement with international financial institutions for concessional development financing. Also the 'Grand Bargain' commitments, along with more un-earmarked and increased multi-year funding to ensure greater predictability and continuity in humanitarian response, should be scaled up and mainstreamed into all aspects of humanitarian action.
4. For a more effective use of its finite resources, UNHCR must continuously strive to bring in greater efficiencies through system-wide coherence, increased localization and involvement of national and local responders. We note with satisfaction the increasing share of Cash Based Interventions in UNHCR's operations. We would like to see an early conclusion

of the ‘Change management process’ initiated by UNHCR and recommend progressive application to field operations as well.

5. The Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) based on the ‘whole of society’ approach and on the principles of international cooperation and equitable sharing of burden and responsibility is a move in the right direction. The CRRF plan of action should fully utilize UNHCR’s Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD) approach and effectively link humanitarian and development efforts for sustainable solutions. This would also help in mainstreaming humanitarian action with the SDGs.

6. Only around half a million refugees out of the approximately 17 million could be returned to their homes in the year 2016. Ways to proactively engage the countries of origin of refugees and those hosting them to prevent, stabilize and durably resolve refugee situations through their voluntary return and resettlement must form part of the CRRF plan of action. Greater synergies between the political, developmental and humanitarian arms of the UN for joint action would be critical in this regard.

7. On 2<sup>nd</sup> October, the world marked the international day of non-violence. In the context of refugees, let us pledge to resolve all conflicts through non-violence, which to quote Mahatma Gandhi is the ‘greatest force at the disposal of mankind’.

8. Humanitarian efforts should ‘leave no one behind’ and endeavor to reach the ‘farthest behind first’. No one must remain a ‘refugee or stateless in perpetuity’.

9. Most of the principles, referred to earlier, are already enshrined in the New York Declaration, which has paved the way for a historic opportunity, to turn these commitments into actions through a Global Compact on Refugees.

10. We request UNHCR to further prioritize activities to help fulfill its core mandate of providing protection to refugees in the most trying and difficult circumstances and only act in other situations involving persons of concern, if warranted. This is particularly relevant, as nearly 41 per cent of UNHCR budget remains unfunded and the needs of nearly 4 million refugees could not be met by UNHCR in 2016. The grim picture presented by the High Commissioner for the coming biennium is of concern.

11. As States are accountable to their people and have a central role in humanitarian action, their cooperation is necessary for effective discharge of the mandate of UNHCR. We urge UNHCR to identify, strengthen and work with national and local responders on a much larger scale to ensure localization of solution and ownership of the whole process by the affected people and the host community.

12. We recommend higher allocation of resources and manpower to strengthen UNHCR's campaign to end statelessness. Allocation under pillar 2 should be increased from the current 1%.

13. The protection of Internally Displaced Persons is primarily the responsibility of the State concerned. UNHCR's role in situations of internal displacement must, be with the consent of the State concerned, complement not substitute national efforts, and not detract UNHCR from its core mandate. Needless to mention that, as mandated by its statute, the work of UNHCR must be of an entirely non-political character.

14. A number of States, not parties to the international refugee instruments, have shown a generous approach to hosting refugees. India is one of them. Despite developmental and security related challenges, India has a long tradition of playing host to a large number of refugees from its neighborhood and beyond. We continue to host them, entirely, using our own resources. India is not a source of refugees.

15. India's assimilative civilizational heritage and inherent capabilities as a responsible State gives it a rounded perspective for dealing with persons of concern. Our protection regime is based on the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Indian Constitution and other relevant legal provisions. We continue to refine our legal framework and administrative mechanisms for providing greater hospitality to refugees.

16. India has always responded readily and swiftly to any humanitarian crisis in its neighborhood and beyond.

17. India has stood and will continue to stand with the refugees.

18. Finally, I take this opportunity to renew India's commitment on protection of refugees and cooperation with UNHCR in discharging its core mandate under increasingly challenging and difficult circumstances and look forward to a fruitful outcome through constructive engagement with other stakeholders during this 68<sup>th</sup> session of the Executive Committee.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**04 October 2017**

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