

Statement by Minister of Refugees and Repatriation of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan at the 68th session of EXCOM

In the name of Allah

Excellency Madam Chair!

Excellency High Commissioner!

Honourable Heads of Delegations!

I am honored to represent the government of Afghanistan before this distinguished assembly to speak for the people of Afghanistan. I welcome, on behalf of the government of Afghanistan, the appointment of Ambassador Suraya DALIL as the 1st Vice-Chairperson of the 68th Session of the Executive Committee (ExComm). I commend High Commissioner's recent and vigorous efforts, especially for the Afghan displacement situation as well as refugees from Myanmar. I also welcome the appointment of your very able Representative in Afghanistan while thanking the generous hospitality extended for nearly four decades to Afghan refugees by the governments of Iran and Pakistan, as well as all those involved working to provide protection.

Ladies and gentlemen!

I want to begin by providing you an update on figures; since the establishment of the National Unity government in Afghanistan, nearly two million Afghan refugees and migrants have returned to their homeland, and the National Unity Government has been able to win the trust of returning refugees for their voluntary return and has fulfill this national priority goal successfully. While a million and a hundred and forty seven thousand people repatriated last year, the returnee figures for the current year show that the rate of return will be less than last year. The continued insecurity as a result of the threat of international terrorism playing out on our soil, the lack of basic infrastructure services, limited investment in the development projects for returning refugees and IDPs and the reduction of assistance can be considered as essential factors resulting in the less number of returns.

Following nearly forty years of hosting Afghan refugees, we appreciate the launch in Iran and Pakistan of the process of registering and regulating the undocumented Afghans in mutual cooperation with the Afghan government, which once again demonstrate their goodwill. While expressing our commitment to the regional solutions strategy, I request its extension. I acknowledge that extending the Afghan refugee registration cards in these two countries could be an effective step to ensure future certainty for this large segment of the Afghan refugees.

As you know, Afghanistan and Europe have reached a conclusion on migration management, which has resulted in the proper process of returning migrants by

aligning and implementing the "Joint Way Forward Agreement" between Afghanistan and the EU. While Afghanistan remains committed, let me thank the government and the people of Germany for having stopped the process of forced deportation of Afghans by appreciating the situation in Afghanistan. Thanks also to other European host countries, and I hope that they will also correspond to the ground realities for Afghan refugees in Afghanistan.

In addition to returnees, there are still more than a million internally displaced people who are in need of humanitarian assistance. The Displacement and Returnee Executive Committee, composed of representatives from the Offices of the President, the Chief Executive and the relevant national and international organizations including UNHCR, UNAMA and World Bank, is responsible for implementing the policies approved by the High Commission for Migration, chaired by H.E President of Afghanistan, and the Sub-committee of the Council of Ministers, Chaired by the Chief Executive, within Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework (ANPDF) and National Priority Programs (NPPs). While a new Presidential decree is being worked out to facilitate returnee's easy acquirement of land plots and setting up development programs for returnee's sustainable reintegration, the committee in order to help address the needs of returning refugees and IDPs anticipates the need for \$ 590 million over a year.

In this regard, the joint work and collaboration with national and international organizations are very important. While thanking the partners of the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation, I hope that, in coordination with the most active institutions in the field of migration and displacement and by setting up shared priorities, we could have more achievements.

Ladies and gentlemen!

The fight against corruption is one of the priorities for my Ministry, which is in line with the international community's priority in Afghanistan have been working hard in the respect, to the extend that this year, the Afghan parliament, the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (MEC) and the Afghan National Procurement Office have recognized my Ministry as the leading entity in the fight against corruption and did appreciate our efforts.

Finally, having acceded to the 1951 UN Convention and 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, let me assure you that we are now giving serious consideration to enacting a Refugee Law to implement the international obligations we undertook. This is one of the priorities of the Afghan government/Ministry of Justice and will soon be published in the Official Gazette as a law.