

Monday 23 April 2012

MEDIA ADVISORY

The UN refugee agency and the Government of Switzerland are co-hosting an international conference on the Afghan refugee situation, in Geneva on May 2-3 2012.

The “**International Conference on the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees to Support Voluntary Repatriation, Sustainable Reintegration and Assistance to Host Countries**” will discuss ways to help Afghan refugees.

Participants will also discuss the reintegration of returnees in Afghanistan; capacity building and support to neighbouring countries, with a focus on community-based development. Pakistan and Iran have been generously providing asylum to millions of refugees for over three decades.

The gathering will urge the international community to sustain multi-year humanitarian and development support.

Context:

The Afghan refugees comprise one of the most complex and protracted refugee situations in the world, with 1.7 million registered Afghan refugees still in Pakistan and a further 1 million in Iran.

Afghanistan and its neighbours need continuing international support to achieve lasting solutions for the displaced. Some 5.7 million Afghans have returned home since 2001, through UNHCR's largest voluntary repatriation programme. These refugees represent a significant proportion of Afghanistan's total population, but many are experiencing difficulties in rebuilding their lives.

The conference is expected to endorse both a solutions strategy and the establishment of follow-up mechanisms for implementation.

As the Afghan refugee situation enters its fourth decade, there is a sense of asylum fatigue in host countries. A strategy to sustain international solidarity and burden-sharing is critically required to foster solutions and support host countries to maintain asylum space for refugees pending these solutions.

Venue:

The conference will be held in the Room 1 at the Centre International de Conférences Geneve (CICG) 17, rue de Varembe 1211 Geneva.

Schedule of the conference and related events:

The Conference proceedings will start at 10 a.m. on 2 May. Activities for the second day resume at 9:30 a.m. on 3 May.

Post-event Press Conference:

A press conference by UN High Commissioner António Guterres will take place after the closing session on 3 May at 2 p.m. in Press Room III (Salle III) of the Palais des Nations in Geneva (invitation attached).

Press arrangements:

Accredited journalists can attend the opening session of the conference from 10:00 to 11:30 hours on 3 May 2012.

In view of the security arrangements around the conference, media representatives wishing to cover this event need to register their interest with UNHCR prior to the event to be able to get access to the open sessions. Send your name and details to BALOCH@unhcr.org or call +41 22 739 8830 by 17:00 hours on 01 May 2012.

Background information, press materials and other related material will be available on the UNHCR website at <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/4f9016576.html>.

Press access to the Conference Hall:

Journalists will have to approach the media desk near the Conference Hall entrance inside the CICG. They will then need to register before entering the press gallery in the Conference Hall.

Journalists with video and stills cameras will have access to the central podium before the start of the conference. A space will be available to set up video cameras, with audio dropboxes, to cover the part of the session that is open to journalists.

UNHCR will produce an edited video of the opening and closing session. This will be available through the UNHCR FTP server. Please see FTP instructions below.

There will be no live standup facilities provided. In case a network or agency plans to bring a satellite truck, please advise UNHCR of the vehicle details and license plates for security access.

N.B. All power outlets in the CICG are Swiss type requiring adequate adapter.

Access to UNHCR FTP server:

For downloading UNHCR video materials enter the following address in the Windows Explorer* address bar:

<ftp://ftp.unhcr.org/VIDEOUNIT/>

* If you try to open the address in Internet Explorer, an error message will come up saying the page cannot be displayed. Click on the View menu, and then Open FTP site in Windows Explorer.

A new window should pop up, asking you for an ID and a Password

The Guest ID to log in is: VIDEOUNITG

Password: videohcr

Once you have entered the FTP, click on the "OUT" folder for downloading of UNHCR video material.

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