

Remarks by Thomas Vargas, UNHCR Representative in Indonesia

World Refugee Day 20 June 2016

Your Excellencies from the Government of Indonesia,
Your Excellencies from the Diplomatic Corps,
Colleagues from the United Nations and NGOs,
And all other friends here today

Thank you for coming to join us at the Goethe Institute this morning. I want to make a few brief remarks explaining why today is so important.

UNHCR joins you in marking World Refugee Day 2016 with activities that start this morning here in Jakarta. Similar events are scheduled all around the world to mark this day. We do so against a backdrop of multiple conflicts, growing numbers of forcibly displaced people—more than 65 million globally, 3.8 million refugees in the Asia-Pacific-- and a rising tide of intolerance and xenophobia in many parts of the world.

In order to deal with a crisis of such unprecedented proportions, it is crucial for us to stand together in partnership – Governments, humanitarian agencies and local host communities – with refugees and to pitch in to help them in recognition of our shared humanity.

That is why today, we commemorate the World Refugee Day under the theme “We Stand Together #WithRefugees”. Refugees are ordinary people like you and me but they face extraordinary hardships. They are forced to flee their homes because of war, grave human rights abuses, and other forms of persecution. If they are fortunate to find safe asylum in host countries, they often face new challenges, having likely left all their belongings behind and finding themselves in a new country. Though they have lost a great deal, they still have goals, ambitions and hopes for the future, as all people do.

You all here today as partners play a key role. First, we are grateful to the Government of Indonesia and the Indonesian people, who have been compassionate and generous to refugees in the country. For many years, Indonesia provides refugees a safe place to stay until a longer term solution can be found for them. For this reason, today I am pleased to present our appreciation to the Coordinating Ministry for Political, Legal and Security Affairs as well as several key national partners, for their tremendous support to refugees and others of concern to UNHCR.

Today, I also recognize all the international and national partners who join forces with UNHCR to help a greater number of refugees with basic needs like medical care, education and shelter, as well as to advocate for their rights. With this in mind, I am honored to recognize a few key national partners and present them with awards for their good work, Dompot Dhuafa, the National Human Rights Commission (KomnasHam), the Indonesian Red

Cross (P Merah), Roshan Learning Centre and SUAKA. I am asking them to give a brief presentation of the help they provide refugees in Indonesia. I am hopeful that these good practices will inspire others to get involved in the spirit of solidarity.

I also want to note my respect for the courage and resilience of refugees around the world, including those of you who are with us here today. Please stand up as we salute you.

Allow me to close by saying that Indonesia's generosity and compassion for the refugees truly illustrates the true spirit of Ramadhan and Pancasila. May Indonesia's long tradition in providing humanitarian assistance to the persons of concern to UNHCR continue to be preserved and serve as an example for other countries to follow.

Terima Kasih