

**Remarks by Thomas Vargas, UNHCR Representative in Indonesia - MoU Signing with
KomNasHAM - 28 July 2015**

**Bapak Nur Kholis
Anggota KomNas HAM yang terhormat
Bapak Bapak, Ibu Ibu Sekalian**

I would like to thank Bapak Nur Kholis and members of the National Human Rights Commission of the Republic of Indonesia, for welcoming us today on this very important occasion here at the Commission's Office. It is also good to see our media friends here to support and cover the event.

It is a great honor to be here today to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with Bapak Nur Kholis that will strengthen our collaboration with the National Human Rights Commission for the Republic of Indonesia. Under the leadership of Bapak Nur Kholis, KomNasHAM is well known for its work in monitoring respect for human rights in Indonesia. This work is important because it contributes to eliminating all forms of discrimination there may be in the country. Of course human rights are fundamental protections that all of us deserve to enjoy – the right to life, to security, to dignity among others. These are universal rights that apply to all of us, whether we are citizens or non-citizens, regardless of our ethnicity, religion, or nationality. So that is why UNHCR is particularly honored to work more closely with KomNas HAM to ensure that the human rights of refugees and others under UNHCR's Mandate are protected.

Today Indonesia generously hosts more than 5,000 refugees from countries such as Afghanistan, Myanmar, Somalia, as well as others. These refugees are people who were forced to flee their countries of origin or habitual residence to avoid persecution and literally to save their lives. Back home, they were deprived of the fundamental rights I just mentioned that all of us human beings are entitled to. They had no options but to seek refuge in other countries like Indonesia, which provides refugees a safe place to stay until an appropriate longer-term solution can be found for them.

Last month, UNHCR marked World Refugee Day, with almost 60 million people forcibly displaced from their homes worldwide– that is a record number. By hosting these 5,000 refugees I just mentioned, as well as others in need of protection, Indonesia is showing solidarity and sharing responsibilities with other host countries. Indeed, that generosity was vividly shown by the Indonesian Government and the people of Aceh and North Sumatera in May this year, when they --in true humanitarian spirit-- welcomed the Rohingya refugees and others who were rescued from boats abandoned by smugglers.

Receiving refugees in need of protection sometimes calls for communities and the refugees to work together towards a common understanding and to recognize the mutual benefits they can bring to each other. Refugees also need to understand that like a guest in someone's home, they are expected to respect the laws and traditions

of their host country. That is why I am pleased that among the various activities UNHCR and KomNas HAM will be collaborating on is to work together to improve mutual understanding and dialogue between the refugees and their host communities.

With this MOU, UNHCR looks forward to stronger collaboration with KomNas HAM, and to ensuring that measure are in place to protect the human rights of refugees and others who may face discrimination or other human rights violations. Our cooperation will focus particularly on protecting children and preserving family unity. With this in mind, joint activities will include monitoring detention facilities and promoting alternatives to detention, especially for unaccompanied children, as well as preventing and raising awareness on statelessness.

In closing, I would like once again to thank Bapak Nur Kholis and the other members of KomNasHAM for expanding the breadth of its important and invaluable work to include refugees who, like all of us, are entitled to the human rights guaranteed to all.

THANK YOU/TERIMAKASIH