

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Statement delivered by H.E Dr. Rahmani Fazli,

Minister of Interior of the Islamic Republic of Iran

At the High-level Segment on the Afghan Refugee Situation

66th Session of the Executive Committee

Geneva, 6th October 2015

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me at the outset to express my sincere appreciation to you for this very important and timely meeting on “Afghan Refugee Situation”. I am thankful to the High Commissioner and his able team for all the excellent arrangements. We have high hopes on contribution of this very event to alleviation of sufferings of the Afghan refugees and development of Afghanistan, so that further proper grounds for the return of refugees to their homeland country could be facilitated.

Mr. Chairman

Distinguished participants,

Geography is our destiny. Afghanistan and Iraq have been the origin of major refugee flows to the Islamic Republic of Iran in recent decades. Foreign occupation and terrorism contributing to exacerbation of instability and insecurity as well as destruction of infrastructures and underdevelopment are among the root causes of massive influx of the refugees and displaced persons.

Hosting a huge population of refugees for many years now, has turned the Islamic Republic of Iran to stage among the lead countries in the history of humanitarian assistance. This has been remarkably achieved on the basis of our religious teachings and humanitarian principles. This, however, has been attained, at the expense of sizable national investments and resources, against the absence of sufficient international support. The refugees now enjoy job opportunities, primary, secondary, higher and professional education and health services above many international standards. Many of them are now more educated and healthier than before. This definitely will have a positive bearing

on the reconstruction of Afghanistan. We undertook all of these while faced with the negative impacts of the war and unjust sanctions imposed upon us. The incurred costs of hosting refugees on our development drive are indeed uncountable.

Mr. Chairman

Irritated livelihood due to instability and underdevelopment is a major contributor behind population movements. Promoting stability and reconstruction in Afghanistan and Iraq is a major undertaking for the international community. The Islamic Republic of Iran, in addition to hosting the refugees has been in support of the governments in both neighboring countries to achieve stability and development.

We believe a viable resolution of the problems of Afghan refugees should be sought within their own homeland country. In our view the best durable and most appropriate solution for their plight is voluntary repatriation, which has been the focus of our policy for the past 30 years. Our practical and objective participation in the reconstruction of Afghanistan is a testimony to this resolve.

I would like to reiterate that for the voluntary repatriation to take place, along with the willingness of refugees, it is necessary to set the proper conditions for repatriation as well as re-integration in Afghanistan. We renew our call to the international community as a whole, to take necessary measures for sustainable repatriation of Afghan refugees, in safety and dignity, by playing a more proactive role in reconstruction of Afghanistan. Indeed the real needs of Afghan refugees should be met through their participation in the reconstruction of their homeland.

Mr. Chairman,

According to the decisions made during the “International Conference on the Solution Strategy for Afghan Refugees to Support Voluntary Repatriation, Sustainable Reintegration and Assistance to Host Countries” held in May 2012 in Geneva, the 4th meeting of the “Quadripartite steering Committee on the Solution Strategy for Afghan Refugees to Support Voluntary Repatriation, Sustainable Reintegration and Assistance to Host Countries” was convened in 19 May 2015 in Iran with the participation of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and UNHCR as the members of quadripartite committee

as well as the UNSG deputy special representative on Afghanistan. In this meeting, participants reiterated their commitment to the principle of voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees and stressed the importance of solutions strategy for identifying and implementing durable solutions for Afghan refugees, to enable them to return to their country voluntarily in safety and dignity in the framework of solutions strategy. The participants also emphasized on the importance of inclusion of an agenda item on the issue of returnees, in the Afghanistan reform agenda and at the same time, supported the provision of assistance package to the repatriating refugees as well as their re-integration in that country.

Following the “International Conference on the Solution Strategy for Afghan Refugees to Support Voluntary Repatriation, Sustainable Reintegration and Assistance to Host Countries” held in May 2012 in Geneva, a number of projects were defined and implemented in the Islamic Republic of Iran during 2013 and 2014. Recently and in the framework of the solutions strategy, the projects related to the years 2015 and 2016 have also been defined in cooperation between the Iranian Government, UNHCR, some UN agencies as well as national and international NGOs. I hope with the effective implementation of these projects and the provision of necessary resources to them, the process of Afghan refugees’ voluntary repatriation and their sustainable re-integration in that country is reinforced.

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to conclude by reiterating that the problem of refugees is of a global nature, requiring global investment. The international community as well as the developed countries should take full responsibility vis-à-vis this issue. Immediate action at the global level should be undertaken to fulfill commitments toward assisting voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees as well as their resettlement especially from among vulnerable refugees. The Islamic Republic of Iran, in spite of its own development constraints, has shouldered much of this responsibility. This is yet a common undertaking and a shared responsibility, the fulfillment of which contributes tremendously to regional and international peace and development. Let us join hands to achieve this noble human objective.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.