

Statement by the Delegation of Nepal during the General Debate at the 68th Session of the Executive Committee of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' Programme, 2-6 October 2017, Geneva

Madam Chairperson,

My delegation thanks the High Commissioner, His Excellency Filippo Grandi, for his comprehensive statement at the beginning of the Executive Committee session. As the High Commissioner noted, the immense challenge faced in dealing with the problems of refugees and displaced persons in the world calls for increased understanding on the grassroots causes of conflicts, violence and disasters, and forging a mechanism of partnership and cooperation based on respective capacities of the nations.

Nepal believes that protection of minorities and the vulnerable segments of society and ensuring their human rights make the world more humane, peaceful and secure. It's critical that we continue our efforts to tackle the increasing menace of racism, xenophobia and intolerance in the contemporary world, and create an environment for global respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and an early response to humanitarian situations. In this respect, the convening of a special segment on the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework by UNHCR during the current session of the Executive Committee deserves appreciation. We hope that the views and perspectives put forward and good practices shared during the deliberations would contribute towards preparation of a programme of action for the Global Compact on Refugees being developed under the auspices of UNHCR.

Madam Chairperson,

While we share concerns over increasing shortfall of humanitarian budgets to meet escalating global humanitarian needs of refugees and displaced persons, we stress that further burdens cannot be added to the refugee hosting developing countries, particularly LDCs, who have very limited capacity to do so. In the same manner, we also emphasize that without addressing the root causes, large movement of refugees and migrants cannot be managed effectively.

Madam Chairperson,

Although not a party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, Nepal has generously hosted tens of thousands of refugees for a long time. A large number of Bhutanese refugees forcefully evicted from Bhutan have been hosted in Nepal for more than two and a half decades. We have a firm view that the refugees have inalienable right to return to their homeland with safety and dignity, and it must always be upheld in all circumstances.

The third country resettlement of over a hundred thousand Bhutanese refugees that began in 2008 has been a successful example of its kind. The Core Group of countries - with US on the lead, and comprising Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Denmark, Norway, UK and Netherlands - deserve appreciation for having taken over a hundred thousand Bhutanese refugees in third country resettlement. While the core group of countries have shown such generosity, Bhutan itself is dormant in response and regrettably shirking its responsibility for its citizens sheltered in Nepal. Safe, secure and dignified repatriation of the refugees to their homeland on a voluntary basis provides the only durable solution to the problem. The remaining Bhutanese refugees in refugee camps in Nepal are eagerly waiting to go back to their homeland. In this context, we need to recall the UNGA resolution 194 of 1948 that emphasizes on the prime responsibility of countries of origin for establishing conditions that allow voluntary repatriation of refugees in safety and with dignity. Nepal is always ready to engage Bhutan bilaterally to resolve this problem, and requests the support of the international community for creation of a conducive environment in this regard. We remain committed to bringing this protracted problem to an end through voluntary repatriation of the remaining refugees to Bhutan and the closure of the refugee camps at the earliest.

In conclusion, Madam Chairperson, Nepal remains constructively engaged with UNHCR, and appreciates the support it has provided to the refugees in Nepal. We are also thankful to the World Food Programme, donor community and other entities for their continued support for the protection and care of the refugee population in Nepal. We further commend the crucial role played by UNHCR in responding to multiple emergencies and humanitarian situations, and in ensuring protection, care and maintenance of millions of refugees and displaced population around the globe.

I thank you.