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**Statement by the Head of Delegation of Nepal at the General Debate of the
69th Session of the Executive Committee of the UNHCR's Programme,
1-5 October 2018, Assembly Hall, Palais des Nations, Geneva**

Madam Chair,

I thank the High Commissioner for the comprehensive opening statement and the assessment of the existing and imminent challenges for the protection and assistance of the people forcefully displaced on various grounds. The High Commissioner's vision for the implementation of Global Compact on Refugees as a tool to address these challenges is noteworthy.

The world has witnessed a large-scale influx of refugees and displaced people over the years. The number of people forcefully displaced has hit 68.5 million as per the record of last year, putting pressures on host countries and communities.

Addressing the protection and other humanitarian needs of such a large number of people who are compelled to flee their homes as refugees or displaced people has become a formidable challenge. The protracted refugee situations, such as the one in the Middle-East, and the emerging large-scale humanitarian crises in a number of countries across the globe call for wider international collaboration and partnership based on respective capacity of States to bear the responsibilities.

Nepal commends UNHCR for its enduring commitment to respond to the emergencies and humanitarian situations, to ensure protection, care and maintenance of millions of refugees and displaced people around the world. We believe that the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) and Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) would provide a cooperation framework for the international community to work in unison to avert the humanitarian crisis and mitigate the emergency situations.

Madam Chairperson,

Nepal has hosted thousands of refugees for decades on humanitarian grounds, despite not being a party to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. We have been providing shelter to thousands of Bhutanese refugees for decades. Over 110 thousand of these refugees got resettled in the third countries over a period of time, but there is still a remaining population not willing or in a disposition for third country resettlement. They are waiting for ultimate repatriation to Bhutan.

Despite the limited socio-economic capacity and difficult domestic situation and other pressing national challenges, we have put all efforts to ensure the protection and upkeep of the refugees in cooperation with UNHCR, other relevant agencies and donor partners. Our bilateral engagements with the Government of Bhutan, with utmost sincerity and genuine will to find a lasting solution to the problem could not succeed because of the continued rigidity and non-cooperation by the Bhutanese side. Consequently, the Bhutanese refugee problem has become one of the most protracted refugee problems in the world.

While remaining committed to bringing this problem to an end through bilateral process, Nepal calls for the resumption of the stalled dialogue to ensure safe and dignified repatriation of the refugees and the final closure of the refugee camps at the earliest.

Madam Chair,

Nepal appreciates the sustained support by the Core Group of Countries in the third country resettlement of the Bhutanese refugees. This is a success story of burden and responsibility sharing on the basis of respective capacity in handling refugee issues. While commending this generosity by the Core Group of Countries including the US, I reiterate that safe, secure and dignified repatriation of refugees to their homeland on a voluntary basis is the only durable solution to the problem. The High Commissioner has rightly noted in his opening statement that the refugees have inalienable rights to return to their homes in safety and honour in all situations. 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.

In conclusion, **Madame Chair**, Nepal expresses appreciation and support to the UNHCR for leading and coordinating actions to provide protection and assistance to millions of refugees worldwide. We hope that the Refugee Compact would provide timely and useful framework for cooperation in handling refugee issues. While recalling the close and constructive engagements between Nepal and UNHCR, we commend the support and care it has provided

to the refugees in Nepal. We are equally thankful to the World Food Programme, donor community and other entities for their continued support in the protection and care of the refugee population.

I thank you Madam Chair!