



**Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the UN
Geneva**

Statement

Statement by H.E. Mr. Asif Durrani
Special Representative on Afghanistan
at 74th Plenary Session of the UNHCR Executive Committee
(9-13 October 2023)

Chairperson,
High Commissioner Filippo Grandi,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am privileged to represent my country at the 74th ExCom session.

As UNHCR's longstanding partner, Pakistan appreciates Mr. Filippo Grandi and his office for their tremendous service to millions of refugees and displaced people worldwide.

Excellencies,

I convey our heartfelt condolences over the loss of precious lives and destruction of property in the devastating earthquake in Western Afghanistan. Pakistan has offered assistance to the brotherly people of Afghanistan to overcome their difficulties, especially at the onset of winters which are normally very harsh in that country.

Pakistan shares concerns over the unprecedented humanitarian challenges. We are witnessing a backsliding of international support to refugees and host communities.

While low and middle-income countries are hosting a staggering 75% of global refugees, their grand contribution has yet to be reciprocated with a fair share of burden and responsibility sharing.

This disconcerting trend must be arrested. The international community must step up, not step away from those who need us the most.

Distinguished Delegates,

Pakistan is proud of its historical role in hosting and protecting refugees. For over four decades, Pakistan has welcomed millions of Afghan nationals fleeing violence and conflict with open arms and hearts. Not only that, Pakistan provides secondary and tertiary medical health facilities to 95% Afghans; thousands of Afghan youth, men and women, have studied in Pakistan's educational institutions, and now serving Afghanistan in various fields.

Since August 2021, an additional 700,000 Afghan nationals have arrived in Pakistan taking the total number of Afghan refugees and those with other statuses to over 3 million.

While our resources may have been modest, our hospitality continues to remain responsive and sustained.

Madam Chair,

During the past few years, a slew of interlocking crises including the aftershocks of COVID-19 pandemic, new conflicts, global recession and climate induced disasters, have stretched the country's resources to the limit.

Last year, the unprecedented floods submerged one third of Pakistan under water, pushed an estimated nine million people below the poverty line and caused damages worth over US\$ 30 billion.

The multifaceted challenges faced by Pakistan are emblematic of the problems of a majority of developing countries hosting large refugee populations for protracted periods. These countries need concrete support to enable them to host adequately large volumes of displaced people.

Excellencies,

Achieving durable solutions is the key to breaking the vicious cycle of refugee outflows and vulnerability. Pakistan, therefore, has been resolute in its support to the multilateral framework of Solution Strategy for Afghan refugees.

We reiterate our commitment to its three pillars on voluntary repatriation, sustainable reintegration in Afghanistan and support to host countries.

We have taken note of UNHCR's Priority Areas of Return and Reintegration (PARR) approach within Afghanistan. The internal displacement within Afghanistan is on decline with almost 1.4 million IDPs

having returned to their areas since 2021. Also, a little over 10,000 Afghan refugees in Pakistan availed the voluntary repatriation programme facilitated by UNHCR.

Let me make it clear that the Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan (IFRP) of the Government of Pakistan is meant for those individuals currently residing illegally in Pakistan, including individuals who are overstaying their visas and do not possess valid documentation. Hosting refugees for nearly four decades with considerably reduced international support, combined with security incidents and economic constraints have forced Pakistan to strictly enforce visa regime in accordance with international norms. This is the main reason for the current drive against illegal and undocumented foreigners. The issue should not be conflated with the status of those individuals and household registered in Pakistan, including Afghans with Proof of Registration (PoR) Cards and Afghan Citizen Card (ACC).

Distinguished colleagues,

We understand that improved security situation and possibility to work with the interim government in Afghanistan for creating conditions conducive for refugee returns.

The returning refugees would require sufficient financial assistance to resettle and rebuild their lives. We therefore encourage UNHCR to increase the repatriation grant of Afghan refugees. The current amount of US\$ 375 is insufficient.

After years of turmoil, there is no war in Afghanistan. However, the country is braving serious economic and humanitarian challenges, which remain a cause of concern for international community, especially its neighbouring countries. We hope that the international community will pursue path of pragmatic and sustained engagement with the Afghan Interim Government at this pivotal moment.

Distinguished colleagues,

Pakistan believes that the 2nd Global Refugees Forum provides a unique opportunity to move the needle on burden and responsibility sharing for refugees.

To address the protracted refugee situations around the world and translate objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees into tangible outcomes, the peculiar situation of host countries must remain high on the agenda. Providing loans to host countries that adds to their debt burden is a contravention of the principle of burden and responsibility sharing.

Refugee resettlement and third country solutions are also an expression of international solidarity. We appreciate countries that are expanding their quotas for resettling refugees. More can and must be done.

It is now well established that voluntary repatriation and reintegration of refugees in their countries of origin is the best solution for protracted and large refugee situations. We call upon the international community to support refugee access to this solution through enhanced provision of development, humanitarian and economic assistance to the country of origin, as in the case of Afghanistan.

Excellencies and delegates,

Pakistan believes in the potential of multilateral cooperation to deliver on common challenges through collective action. Refugees and host communities today await concerted global efforts in shaping a secure and prosperous future for themselves and their posterity.

I thank you.
