

Remarks of the Director of DIPS, Elizabeth Tan
At 96th meeting of the Standing Committee, 16-18 June 2026
Agenda item 2 (a) – Note on International Protection
Tue 16 June, approx. 11h00
DIPS Director’s Remark

(estimated length: maximum 5 minutes)

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Colleagues,

It is an honour to introduce the **Note on International Protection** as we mark the seventy-fifth anniversary of the 1951 Refugee Convention. This anniversary is an opportunity to reaffirm our shared commitment to uphold international protection.

For seventy-five years, the Convention has been the **cornerstone of the international protection system**—safeguarding non-refoulement, access to asylum, the rights of refugees, and durable solutions. It remains a vital and practical framework for addressing refugee protection challenges.

This year’s Note underscores an **exceptionally challenging global displacement context**. More than 117 million people are forcibly displaced worldwide, while the humanitarian system is under severe strain and funding shortfalls are affecting the ability of States, UNHCR and partners to respond at the necessary scale. Against this backdrop, and amid concerns about misuse of asylum systems, some States adopted further restrictions on access to asylum and deterrence measures at borders, with serious humanitarian and protection consequences.

The Note makes clear, however, that **these pressures do not arise from the Convention itself**. They reflect gaps in implementation, insufficient cooperation and responsibility-sharing, and weaknesses in broader migration management.

Effective international protection depends on **fair and efficient asylum systems**. In 2025, there were 2.8 million new asylum applications, while around 9 million people remained awaiting decisions globally. These figures underline the need for capable, timely and fair national asylum systems. Some States have advanced reforms, but continued effort is needed to reduce backlogs, uphold procedural standards, and support countries with developing their capacity and institutions for determining claims and providing protection.

The principle of **non-refoulement** has also come under pressure in some contexts through pushbacks, unsafe transfers, and arrangements that raise questions about how responsibilities are allocated. Respect for non-refoulement remains fundamental among States' responsibilities, and to the mandate of UNHCR.

Today's displacement is also increasingly characterised by **mixed and onward movements**, with refugees and migrants travelling along the same routes. This requires coordinated, protection-sensitive responses along routes, grounded in international law.

Excellencies,

Protection must remain central, especially for displaced and stateless people in **vulnerable situations**. Children, who make up around 40 per cent of the displaced, face heightened risks of violence, exploitation and family separation. Women and girls continue to face alarming levels of gender-based violence, often exacerbated by conflict and displacement.

The Note also highlights advances in **sustainable responses**. Where refugees have access to education, livelihoods and national systems, they can contribute to host societies, achieve greater self-reliance and move towards durable solutions. Important examples of progress by States and partners show the value of stronger legal and policy frameworks, expanded

access to national systems, community-based approaches and partnerships with local organisations.

The Note further underlines the need for **greater investment in durable solutions**. Voluntary repatriation remains a key pathway, but too many returns in 2025 and 2026 took place in difficult circumstances, including where conditions were not yet fully conducive to safe, voluntary and sustainable return.

At the same time, **resettlement** opportunities declined in 2025. While promising initiatives on **complementary pathways** moved forward, third-country solutions on a larger scale are needed more than ever, in line with the principles of international cooperation and burden and responsibility-sharing and the Global Compact on Refugees.

Local integration remains another critical durable solution, and the Note records positive developments on access to naturalisation in several countries.

The Note also highlights the needs, progress and remaining gaps in the protection of **internally displaced persons** and **stateless persons**. Two dedicated conference room papers have also been tabled on these issues, and I will return to main developments in those areas later in this meeting.

Excellencies,

Allow me to conclude with a clear message from this year's Note: the 1951 Convention remains **as relevant today as it was seventy-five years ago**. It is not the source of today's challenges; it is part of the solution.

The message of the Note is therefore both principled and practical: The Convention remains the foundation of international protection, but its promise depends on implementation – access to safe territory; fair, efficient and accessible asylum systems; respect for international legal obligations;

greater cooperation and responsibility-sharing; and sustained investment in inclusive and durable responses.

As we mark this anniversary, it is an opportunity to reaffirm the Convention's enduring relevance and strengthen our shared commitment to advancing protection and solutions for displaced and stateless people. UNHCR will continue to work with States on upholding protection as its core mandate responsibility.

I look forward to a constructive exchange with delegations.

Thank you.