

**Fourth Bali Regional Ministerial Conference**  
**Statement by Erika Feller**  
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**Bali, 30 March 2011**

Mr. Chairman, Co-Chairman, Distinguished Delegates,

-My thanks go to the Co-Chairs for the invitation extended to UNHCR to participate in this 4th Ministerial Meeting of the Bali process. Our interest in doing so flows directly from the significance of the discussions for the future of asylum and migration management in the region.

-UNHCR has been associated with the Bali Process since its inception. However, it is fair to say that asylum-related issues, until quite recently, have been somewhat on the periphery of the discussions. There is now an evolution of thinking in this regard, as is clear from the results of the Senior Officials meeting. We appreciate this development, which flows in our view very logically from the reality that failure to address the humanitarian and protection needs of refugees only destabilises refugee groups, contributes to their onward movement and feeds the growth of a now flourishing people-smuggling industry in the region.

-The Asia-Pacific region is no stranger to refugees. It currently hosts more than 3.7 million refugees many of them in situations of protracted displacement. Refugees arrive and move side by side with many others coming to the region to seek economic betterment, reunite with family members or for other non-refugee reasons. If refugees are in the minority, they are certainly among the most vulnerable.

-UNHCR is not a migration management agency. Nor do we seek to become one. However States have given us the Mandate to work closely with them to ensure refugees are assisted and protected and it is in this context that we have been closely associated with participating states over many years in programs directed at building national capacities to resolve refugee problems.

-What has become increasingly apparent is that national capacities have been particularly challenged by mixed flow situations which have regional dimensions impacting several countries. Shared concerns in this regard have included preservation of national security and integrity of borders, responding to the human security needs, ensuring safety of life at sea, and safeguarding good neighbourly relations.

-The diversity of national responses to such challenges has become part of the problem in itself, in that it has distorted the push and pull factors influencing the choices of the people moving and has facilitated their exploitation by people smugglers and human traffickers. From UNHCR's particular perspective this has also meant instability and unpredictability for protection delivery and in the realisation of longer term solutions for the persons of our concern.

-Experience strongly supports the conclusion that there is a growing need to complement and embed national and bilateral responses within a regional approach.

This contributes not only to better protection of vulnerable people but, in addition, helps to address security concerns of States.

-Against this background, and to facilitate reflection on possible parameters for a more coordinated and comprehensive regional approach to shared problems involving refugees and irregular movements, UNHCR cooperated in the organisation of a workshop on the matter held with interested states and other partners in Manila in November 2010. The outcome, which was greeted as positive - i.e. as pragmatic and solution-oriented while principled - is reflected in the documents submitted for consideration by Ministers today. These documents take some inspiration from UNHCR's 10 Point Plan of Action on Refugee Protection and Mixed Migration. The plan has found wide favour globally with governments and intergovernmental and non-governmental entities, and is increasingly resorted to as a planning tool, albeit one that has to rest in the end on the national and regional specificities.

-The goal of the plan, simply put, is to ensure: [1] that people who need protection receive it; [2] that those who do not are assisted to return home; and [3] that all people are treated with dignity while appropriate solutions are found. The Manila meeting endorsed the value of a Regional Cooperative Framework (RCF), which could be built on these objectives, always in full respect for sovereignty of States and fully mindful also of national security requirements. The RCF was seen as an opportunity to accommodate the interests of all states involved, including source, transit and destination countries. The meeting especially appreciated the cooperative and non-binding manner in which the Regional Cooperation Framework – RCF - would be set up.

Central to 'operationalizing' the RCF for interested States could be the three regional support functions outlined in UNHCR's paper. We are pleased that these received positive support from Senior Officials as the foundation for deeper and practical collaboration with interested States.

These functions could be catalytic in harmonising approaches to reception, identification, registration and determination of solutions which are key to reducing incentives to resort to secondary movements.

-An endorsement by this conference of the regional cooperation framework would pave the way to developing regional cooperation in practical ways. UNHCR, in partnership particularly with IOM, and others, is prepared to play whatever role in this regard States might wish of us, which is consistent with our mandate and is seen by all to be value-added, notably when it comes to the protection of persons of concern.

Thank you