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*To the attention of the media*

## PRESS-RELEASE

### UNHCR launches new online database with human rights and refugee information in Russian

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KYIV / TBILISI. On December 10, the UN Refugee Agency marked Human Rights Day by launching the Russian language version of Refworld, a new online database with 4,500 human rights and refugee related documents.

The website ([www.refworld.org.ru](http://www.refworld.org.ru)) was modelled after the Refworld database in English, which is a widely used online research and protection tool helping government officials and judges to decide whether someone is a refugee. Other stakeholders in the asylum procedure - lawyers, legal aid providers, NGOs - will also benefit from this new tool. The Russian database has been established to overcome the existing difficulties in finding accurate, impartial, and up-to-date information in Russian. It helps to ensure that asylum officials in Eastern European and other Russian speaking countries have access to relevant country information which they need to make asylum decisions in individual cases.

*"UNHCR has long wanted to create a Russian version of Refworld, since we know that migration services and asylum lawyers working in the region need better access to country-of-origin information in order to make good decisions on asylum cases",* said Mr. Oldrich Andrysek, UNHCR Regional Representative for Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine.

Refworld offers, free of charge, a vast collection of reports, policy guidance and position papers, along with, amongst others, decisions of the European Court of Human Rights, European Union asylum instruments and relevant national legislation. The collection is updated regularly from more than 60 reputable sources – including UNHCR and other UN bodies, governments, international and regional organizations, non-governmental organizations, academic institutions and judicial bodies. A number of thematic pages in Refworld, offering mini-portals with information on *Children; Gender Equality and Women; Caselaw of the European Court of Human Rights; Refugee Protection and International Migration; Refugee Status Determination; and the UN Human Rights System*, will be equally interesting for a wider audience including human rights activists, judiciaries, academics and researchers.

**The availability and accessibility of relevant information in Russian, in one central database has the potential to contribute to better quality asylum decisions in all countries where Russian is used as a first language or is otherwise generally spoken and understood. Asylum-seekers who apply for international protection in Russian-speaking countries are therefore the ultimate beneficiaries of this project.**

The English version of Refworld was created more than two decades ago by UNHCR as a collection of protection information initially available on CD-ROM and DVD. The database went online in 2007, strengthening UNHCR's international protection mandate and making a selection of protection information available to everyone.

The creation of the Russian version of Refworld was undertaken as part of the [Asylum Systems Quality Initiative in Eastern Europe and South Caucasus Project](#). The two-year project with a 2.5 million Euro budget, funded by the European Union and co-funded and implemented by UNHCR, seeks to work with Government agencies on quality of asylum procedures and refugee protection in six countries. The project covers Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.