

**Launch of Mapping Ireland, a report on refugee integration in Ireland
Statement by Manuel Jordao, UNHCR Representative
(Buswells Hotel - Dublin, 23 April 2009)**

Director-General,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for being with us here today. My colleague Emilie Wiinblad Mathez will be soon presenting you the results of more than one year of research work in the area of integration challenges currently faced by refugees, governments and hosting communities in Ireland and in Europe.

I would like to thank Minister Conor Lenihan, former Minister for Integration, for his interest in this initiative and his initial acceptance to come and launch the report. As we all know, as events transpired, this was not possible. I wish Minister Lenihan the best in his new position and thank him for his support to UNHCR. At the same time, I take this opportunity to welcome the appointment of the new Minister in charge of integration, Minister John Curran. Representing the Office of the Minister today, I would like to welcome Mr. Diarmuid Cole for having accepted to join us and to share his thoughts on integration with us.

We hope to have an opportunity at the end of Emilie's presentation to field some questions about the research we have undertaken and to discuss the findings. The project focussed exclusively on refugees, but I do not think this limits the value of the findings today. UNHCR, as you can appreciate, is primarily concerned with the specific integration needs of persons who have been forced to leave their countries and seek international protection. Refugees make up little more than three per cent of Ireland's foreign legal residents. While focussing on this group, I believe some of the findings will benefit all groups of permanent foreign residents and become a useful working tool for those involved in advocacy, or in development and implementation of Irish integration policy.

The world in which we live is one facing a number of global challenges, including the one of extensive population movements. More than 200 million people are on the move today. They represent a significant fraction of the world's work force with some 40 million migrants living in the EU

alone. Unfortunately, we must also add to this group an ever increasing number of persons who are forced to leave their countries of origin as a result of conflicts, persecution and widespread human rights violations.

Worldwide, the number of persons in need of protection totals some 32 million people, including more than 11 million refugees. In 2008, countries in Europe received close to 290,000 applications for international protection. In North America, there were more than 86,000 requests. To remain faithful to our humanitarian traditions and principles, we must not only protect people immediately when they are threatened and seek protection, we must also go the distance and give people a chance to find their place to participate in and help build and develop the society they live in.

I am aware that the current economic recession poses its own risks. Insecurity and the anxiety that ordinary people feel can lead to more questioning about the level of support to refugees. It's imperative to keep the humanitarian spirit alive in tough times. Granting asylum is a positive humanitarian action that a society like Ireland can take. It is a life-saving mechanism for a strictly defined group of people who face threats to their lives and human rights. Integration is no less part of this humanitarian act and is an important aspect of protecting a person. Integration is about giving a person who has had no choice but to come and live here a chance to prove his or her worth and to contribute. It's not easy and requires a lot of negotiation.

In my opinion, the research we are launching today contains crucially important up-to-date information on a series of working tools, policies and social mechanisms that are available to European leaders to promote integration, social cohesion and solidarity. This piece of research shows the significant progress made by Ireland in a domain that just a few years ago was simply not recognizable as a problem.

I give the floor to my colleague to take you through it.

Thank you.