

Conclusions of the 27th Tripartite Commission Meeting

Between

The Governments of the Islamic Republics of Afghanistan and Pakistan and UNHCR

Bhurban, Pakistan

19 July 2016

UNHCR hosted and chaired the 27th Tripartite Commission Meeting in Bhurban, Pakistan on 19 July 2016. The meeting was attended by the delegations of the Islamic Republics of Afghanistan and Pakistan and representatives of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Governments of the Islamic Republics of Pakistan and Afghanistan expressed their appreciation to UNHCR for hosting this meeting.

The three parties signed an extension of the existing *Tripartite Agreement between the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, and UNHCR Governing the Repatriation of Afghan Citizens Living in Pakistan, valid until 31 December 2016*, to facilitate voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees in safety and dignity, and enable their sustainable reintegration in Afghanistan.

All parties reaffirmed their commitment to the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR), which remains the regional framework for identifying and implementing lasting solutions for the 1.5 million registered Afghan refugees in Pakistan. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and UNHCR recognized the generosity and goodwill of the Government and people of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for hosting millions of Afghan refugees over the past three decades. Furthermore, the Government of Afghanistan and UNHCR expressed appreciation for the decision by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to extend the validity of the Proof-of-Registration (PoR) cards until 31 December 2016, and urged the Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to consider a long term extension of PoR cards to support voluntary repatriation.

The Governments of the Islamic Republics of Afghanistan and Pakistan expressed their appreciation to UNHCR for the recent increase of the voluntary repatriation and reintegration grant provided to returnees upon arrival in Afghanistan. The additional funds, which effectively double the cash package from approximately \$200 to \$400 per person, depending on transport costs to areas of origin, will support the initial reintegration of returning refugees in Afghanistan.

All parties reiterated their commitment to find sustainable solutions for the more than 1.5 million registered Afghan refugees currently in Pakistan, with voluntary repatriation in conditions of safety and dignity, remaining the preferred solution for registered Afghan refugees in Pakistan. The parties, referring to the conclusions of the 26th Tripartite Meeting in Kabul, further stressed the need to create an environment conducive for voluntary repatriation and sustainable reintegration in Afghanistan, including by improving access to services, increased livelihood opportunities, and land allocation reform.

The Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan provided an update on recent initiatives endorsed by the National Unity Government to ensure the sustainability of voluntary repatriation and reintegration. A five-year national plan of action will soon be presented to the High Commission for Migration, which integrates returnee needs within national development planning processes across responsible line ministries and endorsed by the President of Afghanistan in 2016. The Government

reaffirmed its commitment to continue to enhance efforts aimed at ensuring the sustainable reintegration for those who choose to voluntarily repatriate and expressed confidence that the Unified Plan of Action would yield tangible results and ensure action and accountability across line ministries.

The Islamic Republic of Pakistan commended the Government of National Unity in Afghanistan for its ongoing commitment to finding sustainable solutions for longstanding displacement issues. The delegation welcomed concrete steps taken to fulfill this resolve, such as the establishment of the High Commission for Migration chaired by the President and the endorsement of the Comprehensive Voluntary Repatriation and Reintegration Strategy. The Islamic Government of Pakistan welcomed the Unified Action Plan for its focus on a whole-of-government approach to addressing challenges to sustainable reintegration and urged the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to implement the plan, stressing the need for tangible action and outcomes. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan also urged the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to allocate land suitable for settlement of returnees, in high return areas, with access to basic services and livelihood opportunities. Pakistan emphasized that effective border management is important for smooth implementation of the voluntary repatriation programme. Pakistan further urged the importance of immediate, concrete and tangible reintegration measures for the expected high returns during the remainder of 2016 owing to the enhanced repatriation grant.

The Islamic Republic of Pakistan reaffirmed their commitment to the principle of voluntary return in safety and dignity, provided an update on the extension of the validity of the PoR cards until the end of December 2016, and briefed on on-going discussions and the development of a plan with realistic timelines for phased voluntary return and management of Afghan nationals in Pakistan. In addition, the Government highlighted its support for youth empowerment through education and skills training as a key step towards empowering Afghans for voluntary return and sustainable reintegration. The Islamic Republic of Pakistan further confirmed its commitment to the policy for access to education to every child irrespective of his or her nationality, race or creed.

The three parties to the Tripartite Agreement:

1. Reaffirmed their commitment to the principle of voluntary repatriation, in safety and dignity, under the Tripartite Agreement to end the protracted Afghan refugee situation and urged that intensified efforts should be undertaken to create an enabling environment for voluntary repatriation and sustainable reintegration;
2. Reaffirmed the commitment to uphold the letter and spirit of the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR), as a regional framework and platform for coordinated action to identify and implement lasting solutions for Afghan refugees;
3. *Underlined* the importance of implementing the Tripartite Agreement between the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, and UNHCR, as a platform for facilitating voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees in safety and dignity, and enabling their sustainable reintegration in Afghanistan.
4. *Recognized* the generosity of the people of Pakistan in hosting millions of Afghan refugees for more than three decades, in line with the Islamic values of hospitality and generosity and *highlighted* the need for international solidarity, equitable responsibility-sharing, development investment and active engagement to help bring Afghanistan's refugee chapter to a close;

5. *Acknowledged* the need to pursue innovative solutions in an environment of shrinking humanitarian resources and deteriorating security conditions within Afghanistan and *reaffirmed their commitment* to participate in pro-active joint advocacy and fundraising, within the framework of the SSAR Joint Resource Mobilization Strategy, led by the Government of Afghanistan, supported by the Government of Pakistan and facilitated by UNHCR, to ensure mobilization of resources for the implementation of the SSAR, including the plans of the respective governments and UNHCR. .
6. *Expressed* appreciation for the recent decision by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to extend the validity of the PoR cards until 31 December 2016 and also *stressed* the need for alignment of respective national policies and plans on voluntary repatriation, sustainable reintegration and management of Afghan refugees, as well as strategic planning that enhances resilience and coping strategies of refugees and their host communities, pending return to Afghanistan.
7. *Stressed* the need for further progress in the implementation of the Comprehensive Voluntary Return and Reintegration Strategy (CVRRS), endorsed by the President of Afghanistan, to help create conditions conducive for voluntary repatriation and sustainable reintegration of Afghan refugees and *recognized* the need for concrete measures and timelines to support this process, *including through the Unified Action Plan*;
8. *Underscored that while* the enhanced repatriation and reintegration grant impacts prospects for immediate reintegration of returnees in communities of origin or chosen destination, it is durable return and conditions conducive for sustainable reintegration which will require robust development investments and tangible progress in implementing the Unified Action Plan;
9. *Affirmed* the need for representatives of MoRR and SAFRON respectively to engage with officials addressing border management issues to ensure that factors enabling the voluntariness of repatriation are facilitated without any problems.
10. *Highlighted* the need to pro-actively engage the development actors, both within Pakistan and Afghanistan, to ensure the sustainability of voluntary repatriation and to provide tangible support to host communities pending return. Initiatives such as the Government led Refugee Affected and Hosting Areas (RAHA) programme in Pakistan and the collaboration between UNHCR and World Bank in both Afghanistan and Pakistan were cited as positive steps forward in this regard;
11. *Noted* that children and youth constitute approximately 70 per cent of the refugee population in Pakistan and *stressed* the importance of youth empowerment and improved access to quality education as important factors enhancing prospects for voluntary repatriation and sustainable reintegration. *Noted* the need for both Governments to strive to ensure the equivalency of academic and vocational skills, diplomas, certificates and examination results as appropriate and in accordance with applicable national laws. . *Committed* to take all possible measures, both in Afghanistan and Pakistan to facilitate reintegration of returnee students through provision of intensive language training and extra-curricular programming,

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including provision of induction classes for returnee children to allow them to integrate at the grade following the one attained in Pakistan;

12. *Appreciated* the Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for having enabled access of Afghan refugee children to education facilities in Pakistan and *applauded* their commitment to continue providing access to quality education for all children, including Afghan children;
13. *Highlighted* the need to jointly prepare for the forthcoming high-level meetings on refugee issues, such as the quadripartite consultations in Geneva proposed by the High Commissioner, the United Nations General Assembly high-level meeting to address large movements of refugees and migrants the summit on refugee issues in September, and the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan in October. *Pledged* to work collaboratively to ensure that solutions for the Afghan refugee situation feature prominently on the agendas of these fora, that Pakistan is recognized for its decades-long commitment to ensuring protection for refugees, and that the need for greater responsibility-sharing and support for security and development in Afghanistan and to host-communities in Pakistan is highlighted.
14. *Affirmed* their deep commitment to implementing lasting solutions that bring about a dignified closure to the protracted refugee situation and positively contribute to regional peace, stability, security and development.
15. In line with government strategies and plans of the respective governments, stressed the need for the implementation of the conclusions of the previous tripartite commission meetings.
16. Stressed on the need for appropriate treatment of registered refugees without direct or in direct pressure and harassment, and ensuring the real context of voluntary repatriation.
17. Emphasized on the humanitarian nature of refugee related issues, so as to not be influenced by any political or security matters.

The Parties agreed that the 28th meeting of the Tripartite Commission will be hosted by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in November 2016.

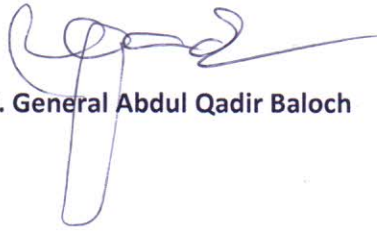


For the
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19 July 2016

Bhurban, Pakistan