

CONCLUSIONS OF THE 28th TRIPARTITE COMMISSION MEETING

BETWEEN

THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLICS OF AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN AND UNHCR

ISLAMABAD, PAKISTAN

15 FEBRUARY 2017

The Islamic Republic of Pakistan hosted and chaired the 28th Tripartite Commission Meeting in Islamabad, Pakistan on 15 February 2017. 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 Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, represented by H.E. Sayed Hussain Alemi Balkhi, Minister of Refugees and Repatriation (MORR), and UNHCR expressed their appreciation to the Minister Qadir Baloach and the Government of Pakistan for hosting the meeting.

The parties recognized the joint efforts made to highlight the Afghan refugee situation at the high-level meetings on refugee issues since the last Tripartite Commission meeting, including the United Nations General Assembly high-level meeting to address large movements of refugees and migrants and the President of the United States Leaders' Summit on refugees on 19 and 20 September 2016, the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan (4-5 October 2016) and the ad hoc High-level meeting of the Quadripartite Steering Committee in Geneva on 7 October 2016.

The Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and UNHCR recognized the hospitality and goodwill of the Government and people of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for its decades-long commitment for hosting millions of Afghan refugees.

The Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan introduced the new initiatives of the Displacement and Returnees Executive Committee (DiREC), including the policy framework and action plan for refugee returnees, returning undocumented Afghans and IDPs.

All parties welcomed the Islamic Government of Pakistan's recent adoption of the national policy relating to the management of Afghan refugees and Afghan nationals in Pakistan, which provides for a more comprehensive, predictable and sustainable response on refugee and migration issues in Pakistan and includes: (1) extension of the Tripartite Agreement and validity of the Proof of Registration (PoR) cards until 31 December 2017; (2) approval of a visa regime for different categories of Afghans, including businesspeople, skilled and unskilled labourers, students and Afghans married to Pakistani nationals; (3) agreement to adopt a national refugee law; and (4) agreement to document undocumented Afghans in Pakistan;

Both Governments appreciated UNHCR's efforts for resource mobilization in the constrained financial environment and reiterated their joint-commitment and continued close cooperation for resource mobilization and seeking lasting solutions for sustainable reintegration in Afghanistan.

The three parties signed an extension to the existing Tripartite Agreement Governing the Voluntary Repatriation of Afghan Citizens living in Pakistan, valid until 31 December 2017.

All three Parties to the Tripartite Agreement:

1. *Reaffirmed* their strong commitment to uphold the principles of voluntary repatriation, in safety and dignity, under the Tripartite Agreement; as well as to pursue and implement lasting

solutions for Afghan refugees within the regional framework of the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR);

2. *Acknowledged* the large number of voluntary refugee returns to Afghanistan, *noted* the complex and varied drivers that resulted in the exponential returns of more than 621,000 Afghans (371,000 registered Afghan refugees and 250,000 undocumented Afghans particularly in the second half of 2016) to Afghanistan; *underscored* the importance of gradual voluntary return in a context of enduring conflict and limited absorption capacity in Afghanistan, and *committed* to continue close coordination between the two Governments to address these challenges;
3. *Committed* to proactive joint resource mobilization for voluntary return and the sustainable reintegration of returnees 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;
4. *Recognized* that in light of limited access to effective reintegration programs in return areas that the enhanced cash grant had contributed to bridging a critical gap by helping returnees meet their most immediate humanitarian needs; and *appealed* to the international community to support the provision of the cash grant;
5. *Expressed* appreciation to the Government of Pakistan for adoption of a national policy relating to the management of Afghan refugees and Afghan nationals in Pakistan, which extends the validity of the Proof of Registration Cards until the end of 2017; commits to adoption of a national refugee law; includes plans for documentation of Afghan nationals who currently have no identification; and establishes a visa regime for different categories of Afghan nationals;
6. *Noted* that UNHCR will closely work with the GoP from the beginning of the implementation of the policy, which provides for a more comprehensive, predictable and sustainable response on refugee and migration issues;
7. *Encouraged* the extension of the validity of Proof of Registration (PoR) cards beyond 2017, for the continued protection of Afghan refugees in Pakistan which will be reviewed in the final quarter of 2017 for further extension and be based on mutual agreement;
8. *Highlighted the importance of continued robust support from the international community to the refugee hosting communities and Afghan refugees remaining in Pakistan in the spirit of equitable responsibility sharing and to ensure that support should be based on the equality for both host and refugee communities as agreed in the jointly approved RAHA document;*
9. *Welcomed* the formation of the high-level Displacement and Return Executive Committee in Afghanistan to ensure that the assistance needs and reintegration prospects of IDPs and returnees are fully reflected in the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework and *stressed* the importance of ensuring concrete progress in the implementation of the DiREC Policy Framework and Action plan;



10. *Emphasized* the importance of reintegration or local integration in areas of chosen settlement as a national priority in Afghanistan, including the provision of civil documentation to returnees, the issuance of passports to regularize movements, land tenure security and access to adequate housing, access to basic services, and promotion of viable livelihoods opportunities;
11. *Affirmed* the need to continue to engage closely with humanitarian and development actors, such as the World Bank in Afghanistan and Pakistan, as well as the international community, to create conditions conducive to sustainable return and reintegration;
12. *Agreed* to continue the support for 'Go and see visits' for refugees to visit their intended places of return, assess conditions and share accurate and updated first-hand information regarding living conditions in Afghanistan with their communities in Pakistan, in order to make informed decisions prior to return, for this purpose refugees should be allowed to travel on their PoR cards;
13. *Underscored* the importance of youth empowerment through education, skills and livelihoods to build the resilience, self-reliance and human capital of the future generation and promote regional stability;
14. *Committed* to ensure unhindered access to education of Afghan children in Pakistan as well as of returnee children in Afghanistan, and particularly for more effective coordination to resolve academic equivalency certificate issues for returnee children and youth; and
15. *Appreciated* the GoA commitment of taking ongoing measures to facilitate reintegration of returnee children in Afghanistan through provision of intensive language training and catch-up classes; and *Affirmed* the need to establish a joint Technical Education Working Group (GoP, GoA and UNHCR) to respond/resolve education-related issues of Afghan refugees also arising in the context of return;

The Parties agreed that the 29th meeting of the Tripartite Commission will be hosted by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in 2017.

FA 

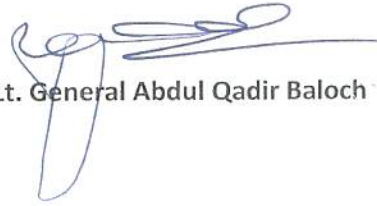


For the
Islamic Republic of Afghanistan



Sayed Hussain Alemi Balkhi

For the
Islamic Republic of Pakistan



Lt. General Abdul Qadir Baloch

For the
UN High Commissioner for Refugees



Afghanistan: Fathiaa Abdalla



Pakistan: Indrika Ratwatte