



## United Kingdom Mission

To the Office of the  
United Nations and Other  
International Organisations at Geneva

08-12-11 PM

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**UNHCR Intergovernmental Ministerial Meeting, December 7-8 2011**

### United Kingdom Plenary Statement

Mr Chairman,

Allow me to begin by thanking the High Commissioner for his <sup>thought</sup>~~through~~ provoking opening address yesterday; he set the scene for our subsequent discussions very well.

As we know, it is 60 years since the United Nations adopted the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, in response to the large number of displaced people in Europe.

Signatories to the Convention hoped that what they called the "refugee crisis" would be solved quickly. UNHCR had been created in the previous year and was only expected to exist for three years since by then, its work would be done. Sadly, that was not the case, and I would like to express our appreciation for the exceptional work that the High Commissioner and his staff continue do, often in difficult and dangerous environments, to help some of the world's most vulnerable people.

It is estimated that the Convention has now helped well over 50 million people restart their lives. The UK is proud to have played its part, welcoming many refugees to our shores and providing them with sanctuary.

And in its 60<sup>th</sup> birthday year, the principles of the Convention, together with the Statelessness Conventions of 1954 and 1961, remain as relevant today as ever.

Mr Chairman,

The UK is proud to work very closely with UNHCR as we strive to maintain a high quality asylum system that protects those who need it.

For example, our Gateway resettlement Programme has helped more than 3,600 of the world's most vulnerable refugees, many of whom have been tortured or raped and have no prospect of being integrated in the country where they have sought refuge, to receive protection in the UK.

And we have worked together over a number of years to develop a world-leading quality audit process for our asylum system- one that has been promoted to other EU Member States as a model of good practice. We are proud of this work, and will

review it in partnership with UNHCR over the coming year to ensure that it provides the broadest and most accurate assessment possible of the quality of what we do.

Like other State Parties we have made a number of pledges at this conference, illustrating our commitment to international responsibility sharing and to the protection of refugees in the UK.

I will not read them all out here, but want to refer to a few key examples to illustrate the work we are doing.

Firstly, we will help to strengthen the international efforts to protect and assist refugees and other persons of concern by increasing our donor contributions to UNHCR.

Secondly, we will continue our efforts to create a more compassionate asylum system in the UK. We have already done a great deal since the present Government came to office. For example we have fulfilled our commitment to end the detention of children for immigration purposes and we have improved the way in which we manage asylum claims brought on the grounds of sexual orientation.

Looking ahead, we will further improve the gender sensitivity of our asylum system, improving both the quality of our decision making and the way in which we take account of the needs of women going through the asylum process. We will deliver new training to our decision makers and will establish a clear baseline of the current position so we can monitor future improvements.

Mr Chairman,

I would like to conclude by reiterating the UK's strong commitment to the principles of the Conventions on Refugees and Statelessness and to working with the UNHCR both to continue improving our own asylum system and to provide concrete and lasting help to refugees across the world.

Thank you Mr Chairman.