

**Permanent Mission of India
Geneva**

**Intergovernmental Ministerial Meeting of UNHCR on the occasion
of the 60th Anniversary of the 1951 Refugee Convention
17-18 December 2011: Assembly Hall, Palais des Nations**

Statement by India

Mr. Chairperson and High Commissioner,

On behalf of the Government of India, our felicitations are extended to the UNHCR, on the occasion of the Intergovernmental Ministerial Meeting of Member States, commemorating the 60th Anniversary of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 50th Anniversary of the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. Mr. Chairperson, it is heartening to see that for the first time, the State Parties and the States not Parties, to the 1951 Convention, together here today. We express our solidarity and commitment to international protection, to the UNHCR and all Member States, through productive dialogue and implementation of programmes for the benefit of refugees. Mr. Chairperson, on this momentous occasion, we wish to convey our appreciation for the seminal and tireless work undertaken by the UNHCR in international protection, including its most recent task in protecting the refugees from Libya, providing them succor and facilitating their safe passage to neighbouring host countries or back home.

2. We also wish to convey our deepest condolences for the brave UNHCR personnel who gave their lives in a despicable terrorist attack, on the morning of 30 October 2011, while doing their duty in Kandahar, Afghanistan. The selfless discharge of duty by the UNHCR personnel serves as an inspiration to not only other humanitarian agencies but States as well. We also take this opportunity to strongly condemn the dastardly acts of terrorism and reiterate our call to the international community, of the need for sustained cooperation amongst States to eradicate this scourge.

3. We agree with the premise of the distinguished High Commissioner, that the environment in which protection for refugees and stateless persons is delivered, has become complex and multifaceted. Consequently, the responsibilities of both the stakeholders, the States concerned and the UNHCR, have increased. We also agree that one of the advantages manifested out of

discharge of responsibilities in this complex environment by both the States and the UNHCR, has been a growing awareness of the need to protect refugees and prevent or reduce statelessness. Such circumstances also make the practice of “non-refoulment” an imperative. We also recognize that while political complexities may limit the implementation of voluntary return in many cases, it continues and will remain the primary option for refugees. Therefore, as States, we have a responsibility, through bilateral and regional political dialogue, amongst ourselves, towards reassuring refugees of safe and stable return to their countries of origin. Given the complex nature of movements of refugees, we would also urge caution in allowing issues relating to asylum and migration to intersect, including supposedly causal factors such as Climate Change, that are yet to be conclusively proven. Furthermore, against the complexities of the international protection environment, and given its formidable experience in this area, we would urge and recommend that the UNHCR continues to focus and strengthen implementation of its core mandate; that of international protection.

4. Mr. Chairperson, India has hosted large populations of refugees on its soil, since times immemorial and continues to demonstrate its deep commitment to the principle of non-refoulment. The Indian Government has ensured that its highest ideals, enshrined in its Constitution, are the basis for the refugees’ protection without any discrimination vis-à-vis its own citizens.

5. Mr. Chairperson, as part of our discharge of responsibilities in humanitarian affairs, we have and continue to share information and best practices related to protection and rehabilitation of refugees in India. Through the institutional framework of the Annual Open-Ended Bilateral Dialogue with UNHCR, we continue to engage in a free-and-frank exchange of information and policies for mutual benefit.

6. Mr. Chairperson, on this important occasion, India pledges to reiterate its commitment to strengthening international solidarity for the protection of refugees. To this end, we look forward to actively participating in the Ministerial meeting’s deliberations for a positive and fruitful outcome. We will continue to strive, in cooperation with States and UNHCR, to overcome the complex challenges of international political environment for the protection of refugees.

Thank you Mr. Chairperson.

7 December 2011