



08-12-11 AM

(In the name of Allah, the most merciful, the most Beneficence)

Mr. Chairman,

Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, at the outset, I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak at this very important occasion.

More than 5.7 million Afghans have returned home since the fall of the Taliban government in 2001. Most of them with the assistance of the international community, in particular UNHCR. My Government is most grateful for this assistance and hopes that it will continue unwavering until the refugee crises has been solved completely. In other words, whilst this voluntary repatriation resulted in Afghanistan's population increasing by nearly a quarter, there are still some three million Afghans living as refugees outside our country. Refugees for whom, the sustainability of their voluntary return to villages and cities is increasingly challenging because of scarce jobs, food, shelter and, unfortunately, because of a deteriorating security situation in some parts of our country.

Internal displacement and outward migration are also increasing. Sustainable reintegration is imperative as it has a direct impact on the overall stability of Afghanistan, and the ongoing engagement and support of the international community to these Afghan refugees is essential. But it is also important that the Government of Afghanistan, together with the Governments of the two main countries of asylum, Iran and Pakistan, create an integrated holistic approach for helping these refugees.

Thus, I am pleased to announce that these three governments are now engaged in the very first quadripartite consultative process, together with UNHCR, to develop a multi year solutions strategy for Afghan refugees. This strategy will be presented to the international community at a stakeholders' conference in April 2012.

For Afghanistan, the key aims of this conference will be focusing attention on addressing challenges to increase Afghanistan's absorption capacity thereby supporting a conducive, sustainable return situation. Because humanitarian assistance has only limited impact, another important objective will be to ensure that return and reintegration issues are firmly embedded into our national development programmes. Community-based interventions in

key provinces of high return, together with key sectors are being identified. We hope that during this conference, the international community will endorse the regional strategy and support a platform of coordination, follow-up and resource mobilization which is also being established.

Ladies and gentlemen!

The people and the government of Afghanistan have demonstrated their commitment to international community in their efforts, to implement conventions, international treaties and laws pertaining to Human Rights.

Afghanistan's signing of 1951 convention and its 1967 protocol provided the opportunity for government institutions and organizations dealing with refugees to strengthen their capacity with the support and coordination of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Accession to the convention also marked a positive step towards greater regional stability and cooperation. While Afghanistan is not presently hosting a substantial number of refugees, a few hundred have sought refugee in our country, and we appreciate the invaluable support so far extended by UNHCR in carrying out Refugee Status Determination on our behalf.

Afghanistan is now in a position to begin working on establishing its own refugee law and, in this connection, I'm honored to pledge my Government's firm decision to introduce - in accordance to best international practice and fully compliant with the 1951 Convention and other international norms - a National Refugee Legislation including policies to implement the aforementioned international instruments and to fulfill the obligations of my country with regard to the 1951 Convention.

My ministry, together with UNHCR and in full consultations with other Ministries as well as competent national and international organizations, is currently drafting the first National Refugee Legislation.

I wish to avail myself of this opportunity to reiterate the gratitude of myself, my ministry and my country for UNHCR's ongoing efforts to improve the conditions of refugees; and I hope that this cooperation will continue and be strengthened.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity of being a part of this Ministerial Meeting which I hope will support the reduction of refugees and stateless persons throughout the world.

Thank you