



INTERGOVERNMENTAL EVENT AT THE MINISTERIAL LEVEL OF MEMBER STATES OF THE UNITED NATIONS
ON THE OCCASION OF 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

7-8 DECEMBER 2011 AM

STATEMENT BY

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Kingdom of the Netherlands

General Debate

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Mr. Chairperson,
Mr. High Commissioner,
Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates

UNHCR and the Netherlands have been connected ever since UNHCR was established. Dutchman Gerrit Jan van Heuven Goedhart was the first High Commissioner. Since the Refugee Convention was agreed in the summer of 1951, the international community and UNHCR have made huge strides in improving the lives of refugees and displaced persons. The Netherlands thanks the High Commissioner and his staff, host countries, donor countries and NGOs for their work.

However, a lot remains to be done. With all the work done by UNHCR, it is - in a way - a shame to all of us that so many people in need have to turn to UNHCR each year. But it is great news that many states today pledge further actions to help refugees and displaced persons. I congratulate those countries that have acceded this year to the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. The Netherlands reaffirms its commitment to both Conventions, and will remain a close partner to UNHCR.

1. Human Security

First, governments need to provide security to their people. Around the world, people are still being forced to flee their homes due to violence, persecution and discrimination. Governments have a responsibility to protect their own people. And only if they fail to act and security cannot be guaranteed, the international community has to take its responsibility. We should prevent that type of situation from getting worse by engaging in active diplomacy. If people are forced to flee conflict and persecution, third countries have to provide shelter and protection. They have to grant asylum if the refugee cannot return home. These fundamental values are the cornerstone of the Refugee Convention. They remain as valid today as in the 1950s.

In this context, I welcome in particular the attention that UNHCR and partners have paid to the position of women and children in the regional dialogues this year. The prevention and reduction of sexual and gender based violence is an absolute priority.

2. Protection

Second, we have to make sure that the option of asylum is kept for those who need it the most and are protected by the Conventions: those fleeing repression, persecution, and violence. Good documentation, registration and status determination are key. Unfortunately, we notice that the Refugee Convention is

regularly abused by people who claim to seek its protection but are motivated only by their search for better economic circumstances, even willing to spread false claims. This can seriously undermine the political and financial willingness of countries to accept the genuine political refugees. We have to be strict so that we can be fair to those who really need our assistance.

The Netherlands will strengthen its cooperation with UNHCR in several fields, including on countering document fraud. In addition, we will enhance efforts to strengthen the protection of the people of concern in their regions of origin. We realize this can be a huge burden to the host countries that provide shelter in the region, so we are willing to assist them and we will do that in close partnership with UNHCR and host governments. We do this, because we believe that refuge in the region usually facilitates a quick return to normal life in the country of origin, once circumstances have improved.

The Netherlands is also helping with resettlements of refugees. If refugees cannot go back and have been living for years in camps, resettlement and local integration can be considered. Of course voluntary repatriation remains the preferred solution.

3. Aligning humanitarian assistance and development assistance

Third, we need to bridge the gap between humanitarian assistance and development assistance, in order to provide durable solutions for protracted refugee crises. We therefore follow with great interest the Transitional Solutions Initiative, which involves UNHCR and other multilateral organisations. UNHCR cannot do this alone.

4. Funding

Fourth, UNHCR, the guardian of the Conventions, needs to be able to operate in an effective, efficient and flexible manner. Donors can play their part by providing unearmarked funding. The Netherlands will continue to contribute to UNHCR with unearmarked funds. But whatever the nature of the funds, they need to be used effectively and efficiently.

5. Conclusion

Mr. Chairperson, a Dutchman stood at the cradle of UNHCR. UNHCR has grown up and we are still standing by your side. We are still guided by the conviction that durable solutions can be found for the world's refugees, with due regard for their human rights. This conviction inspires us all to move forward together. Thank you.



07-12-11 AM

CONFERENCIA CONMEMORATIVA DEL SESENTA ANIVERSARIO DE LA CONVENCIÓN
SOBRE EL ESTATUTO DE LOS REFUGIADOS DE 1951 Y EL CINCUENTA ANIVERSARIO DE
LA CONVENCIÓN PARA REDUCIR LOS CASOS DE APATRIDIA DE 1961

**Intervención del Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores
del Uruguay, Luis Almagro**

Señor Presidente

Permítame comenzar felicitándolo a Usted y a sus co-Presidentes por la organización de este evento ministerial, conmemorativo del 60 aniversario de la Convención sobre el Estatuto de los Refugiados de 1951 y del 50 aniversario de la Convención para Reducir los Casos de Apatridia de 1961.

Ambos instrumentos legales constituyen hoy la piedra angular del régimen de protección internacional para estos dos grupos vulnerables.

Uruguay quiere destacar el papel decisivo que ha venido desempeñando desde entonces la Oficina del Alto Comisionado de las Naciones Unidas para los Refugiados y también agradecer muy particularmente el liderazgo demostrado por el Sr. Alto Comisionado, Antonio Guterres.

Han transcurrido ya sesenta años desde la adopción de la Convención de 1951, instrumento que en su momento intentó ofrecer una respuesta humanitaria inmediata ante el fenómeno migratorio masivo e incontrolable desatado particularmente por las guerras mundiales. Ella ha permitido dotar a la comunidad internacional de un verdadero régimen de protección para los refugiados, esforzándose por asegurarles el ejercicio más amplio posible de sus derechos y libertades fundamentales.

Y a pesar de haber sido firmada hace ya 60 años, la Convención ha dado muestras de una extraordinaria adaptación ante los nuevos desafíos que deben enfrentar los refugiados, enfatizando el imperativo de la cooperación internacional para su solución y la importancia del principio de responsabilidad compartida entre los Estados.

Sin perjuicio de ello, nos parece que la prioridad política de los miembros de la comunidad internacional debería seguir siendo la lucha contra las verdaderas causas de los desplazamientos forzados.

La integración de los refugiados en la sociedad del país de acogida debe realizarse a través de soluciones duraderas y de medios que aseguren su real participación y disfrute de sus derechos, evitando todo tipo de discriminación.

En primer lugar, Uruguay introducirá, mediante la aprobación de legislación pertinente, un procedimiento de determinación formal de la condición de apátrida que conceda a las personas reconocidas un estatuto consistente con los estándares internacionales.

Para aprovechar las capacidades institucionales existentes en el país, se extenderán las competencias de la Comisión de Refugiados al examen y decisión sobre los casos de apatridia.

En segundo lugar, Uruguay fortalecerá las capacidades de la Secretaría Permanente de la Comisión de Refugiados.

La Secretaría Permanente es el órgano encargado de procesar las solicitudes de refugio, realizar el primer análisis de elegibilidad y emitir una recomendación técnica a la Comisión. Su fortalecimiento, a través de recursos materiales y humanos, permitirá reforzar la plena vigencia y operatividad de los estándares internacionales y nacionales.

En tercer lugar, complementariamente a los esfuerzos de reasentamiento solidario iniciados en el 2009, Uruguay pondrá en marcha un programa de reasentamiento en el medio rural, orientado a refugiados que se ajusten a dicho perfil, para fortalecer sus posibilidades de inserción local y autosuficiencia.

Considerando las características de los refugiados provenientes de la región, con los que Uruguay ha trabajado en los últimos 3 años, y la infraestructura que Uruguay posee en materia de educación, salud y acceso a empleo, un programa de este tipo potenciará las perspectivas de reasentamiento exitoso. Este compromiso supone, a la vez, una contribución significativa de parte del Uruguay a las líneas trazadas por la Declaración y el Plan de Acción de México de 2004.

Muchas gracias.