

Statement by Norway

Delivered by Minister of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion

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Mr Chairman, High Commissioner, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen

2011 marks the anniversaries of two remarkable instruments. The refugee convention was adopted in 1951 and the statelessness convention adopted ten years later. Over the years, they both have had a profound impact on the protection of millions of people. And they both remain highly relevant. I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate Norway's strong support for both conventions, as well as our support for the High Commissioner and his office.

Mr Chairman,

One refugee is one too many. We, representing governments from around the globe, need to walk the talk. We must renew our commitment to all those women and men, boys and girls who have been uprooted and forced to flee their homes. Approximately 40 million people of concern receive protection from UNHCR. We still have a daunting task ahead.

Refuge and asylum are by definition international challenges. No organisation or government can address the plight of the world's refugees alone. Solidarity and responsibility-sharing is of utmost importance. Norway's humanitarian policy is therefore based on the notion of "global responsibility". I take this opportunity to express

Norway's appreciation for the countries hosting the largest numbers of refugees.

Protracted refugee situations may represent a stalemate for entire generations of people. They are a drain of human and financial resources. Currently, a number of promising initiatives aim at unlocking longstanding situations and finding durable solutions. The High Commissioner's leadership in this is much appreciated.

Norway therefore, together with a number of other states, pledges *to enhance the delivery of comprehensive durable solutions, notably in protracted refugee situations. We pledge to work with other Member States, UNHCR and partners to promote increased opportunities for refugee resettlement, the participation of new resettlement countries, improved integration outcomes for resettled refugees, and the strategic use of resettlement.*

Mr Chairman,

The refugee convention makes no distinction between male and female refugees. Despite the fact that women and girls make up more than half the world's refugees, too little has been done to deal with their particular situation and particular needs. Anti-discrimination measures must be enhanced, both in policy and in practice. Protection against sexual and gender-based violence must be strengthened. As a concrete recognition of the needs in this area, it is our aim that 60 percent of resettled refugees in Norway should be women.

Children make up almost half the people of concern to UNHCR. Refugee children and adolescents are at high risk of violence and abuse while they are fleeing. In countries of asylum they are often denied their basic rights.

Against this background, the Norwegian government will make sure that *all unaccompanied minor asylum seekers are entitled to a legal guardian to secure and promote their rights in general, and in the asylum procedure in particular. To this effect, we pledge to introduce a new system that will better address the unaccompanied minors' specific needs for a guardian. The new system will ensure official standards for recruitment, training and monitoring of the guardians. It will take effect tentatively in July 2013.*

There is no time to be complaisant as we celebrate the refugee convention. It is our responsibility to also look to the future. We are already witnessing evolving patterns of displacement to which traditional approaches might prove insufficient. We must rise to the challenge. We must educate ourselves and engage in a debate on the most appropriate responses to new challenges. These matters were addressed at the “Nansen Conference on Climate Change and Displacement in the 21st Century”, held in Oslo this summer.

Based on the conclusions of that conference, the so called Nansen principles, the Norwegian government calls for *a more coherent and consistent approach at the international level to meet the protection needs of people displaced externally owing to sudden-onset disasters, including where climate change plays a role. We therefore pledge, along with the Swiss government, to cooperate with interested states and other relevant actors, including UNHCR, with the aim of obtaining a better understanding of such cross border movements at relevant regional and sub-regional levels, identifying best practices and developing consensus on how best to assist and protect the affected people.*

Mr Chairman,

As we continue our tireless efforts to address the needs of the world's displaced and stateless people, I would like to share a quote by Fridtjof Nansen, the League of Nations' first High Commissioner for Refugees. It goes: "The difficult is what takes a little time. The impossible is what takes a little longer."

Thank you, Mr Chairman.