



# PAKISTAN

PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

56 Rue de Moillebeau, 1211 Geneva Tel: (4122) 749 1930 Fax: (4122) 734 8085

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**STATEMENT**

**BY**

**H.E. MR. ZAMIR AKRAM  
AMBASSADOR AND PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF  
PAKISTAN TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

**AT THE**

**UNHCR – INTERGOVERNMENTAL EVENT AT THE  
MINISTERIAL LEVEL OF THE MEMBER STATES**

Geneva, 8 December 2011 PM

Mr. Chairman,  
Distinguished Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen

Allow me to express my Government's most sincere gratitude to UNHCR in particular to the High Commissioner for the invitation to attend this conference.

This is a historic event -- both state parties and non- state parties have come together to discuss ways and means to support refugees all over the world as well as re-engaging and recommitting to seek durable solutions for them and finding ways of improving their living conditions.

For Pakistan, grant of refuge to persons in distress is a manifestation of centuries' old tradition and practice, rooted in our faith and history. We have practically and steadfastly demonstrated this attribute by hosting millions of our Afghan brethren on our soil. For us, this UNHCR event signifies our quest to invite others to join us in this noble cause which symbolises respect for human dignity and willingness to support refugees at all costs.

Over the last 30 years, millions of Afghans have returned home but still around three million live in Pakistan in a situation of temporary asylum. They constitute the largest refugee population in the world. We consider the Afghan refugee problem is one of the most pressing and difficult refugee problems of today. We work with UNHCR to assist and support these refugees. Together, we aspire a shared vision to see their dignified and voluntary return to Afghanistan. With regard to efforts that we put in as a host country, I would like to underscore the following points;

- Pakistan continues to meet needs of refugees in line with its people's aspirations and with full political support. Various measures are in place to ensure that refugees enjoy appropriate standards of living as permitted by our limited resources. We have an Afghan Refugees Management and Repatriation strategy that allows us to adopt a solution oriented approach;
- Given such a large-scale and long-term presence of refugees, our ability to provide continuous support is undermined by lack of commitment on part of the international community;

- Unless, there are serious efforts to resolve the crisis in Afghanistan, our efforts to support them will remain futile, and Pakistan will continue to receive additional caseloads;
- Already host communities in our country have endured much more than their capacity and continuation of this arrangement is no more sustainable.

We sincerely believe that the way forward lies in more international cooperation and burden sharing. This calls for strengthened partnerships to create humanitarian and non-political space to engage in a constructive dialogue, working with the Afghan Government to foster conditions inside Afghanistan to make returns sustainable, and helping us to enhance our capacity to manage their affairs more holistically and more institutionally. It also calls for supporting host communities bearing socio-economic, political, security and environmental impact of refugees. It includes the need to reinforce Refugee Affected and Hosting Areas (RAHA) that supports refugees and their hosts alike. UNHCR is also working to hold a tripartite conference in March next year to seek a permanent solution to the Afghan refugee problem. I urge the international community to provide support and assistance in this noble cause.

Commenting on refugee and statelessness problems elsewhere, I would like to underscore the need to recognize the real contributions of host countries, to pursue enhanced and effective use of re-settlement and to adopt a developmental approach in improving conditions of their living. It is equally important to ensure resolution of issues that have created the Refugee situations in the first place.

I avail of this opportunity to express our deep appreciation to all hosting countries as well as the donors who generously support the refugees and statelessness cause despite their own challenges.

In conclusion, I would like to convey our profound and deepest regards to the High Commissioner and his dedicated team that remains committed, day and night, to deliver their services in Pakistan and around the globe, in all circumstances. The completion of sixty years of UNHCR's existence is indeed a hallmark of such spirited efforts that are aimed at providing humanitarian relief to these needy and down trodden people.

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