

Statement by Ghana at the Ministerial Event to Commemorate 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, Geneva, 7-8 December 2011 PM

Mr. Chairman,
High Commissioner for Refugees,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to address this Executive Committee on the auspicious 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.

The occasion presents an excellent opportunity to congratulate the High Commissioner, his predecessors, the administration and indeed all the brave personnel of this organization who have made it possible to achieve the goals of this organization. We pay tribute, at this stage, to those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice and those wounded in the line of duty, and convey our encouragement to the entire staff as they continue to work with commitment and dedication, even in dangerous places.

Mr. Chairman

From its humble beginning as a small organization with a simple three-year mandate to help resettle homeless European refugees in the aftermath of the Second World War, UNHCR has worked over the years to meet the growing needs of refugees and other displaced people. We commend the organisation for 60 years of international humanitarian action on behalf of refugees and other displaced people, and for its important contribution to addressing the major refugee emergencies during those years.

Mr. Chairman,

If UNHCR was relevant in the aftermath of World War II, it is even more relevant today. This year alone, we have witnessed rolling emergencies around the world, including major earthquakes in Japan and elsewhere,

intense flooding in Pakistan and Thailand, and famine in the horn of Africa, to name a few. These events, coupled with the upheavals of the "Arab Spring", created full blown displacement crises which placed enormous strain on UNHCR and other humanitarian bodies.

We applaud the joint effort undertaken by UNHCR and IOM which proved so effective for the successful humanitarian evacuation of third country nationals from North Africa, and the Ghana Government is particularly grateful for the evacuation of thousands of its nationals who were forced to flee from the affected countries.

Mr. Chairman,

Even as we seek to address new cases of displacement, we are painfully aware of the increasing complexity of the causes of conflict and other sources of displacement. We are confronted with the great irony that while durable solutions are becoming even more difficult to achieve, there is an ever growing number of new conflicts leading to more displacements. Moreover, our failure to find solutions to old and intractable conflicts, has also added to the ever-increasing number of people of concern to UNHCR, the great majority of whom are hosted by States of the developing world, the ones with the least capacity to bear such a burden.

Within this context, my delegation stresses the need for increased international solidarity and burden and responsibility-sharing in order to strengthen our collective capacity to achieve our goals. May I also reaffirm my Government's commitment to the 1961 Convention on refugees and its 1967 Protocol, and pledge its readiness to work in accordance with the Ministerial Communique to be adopted at this session, as well as its continued support to UNHCR.

It is our cherished hope that we will together, hopefully in the not too distant future, be able to satisfactorily bring relief and durable solutions to every person of concern to UNHCR.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.