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Statement by
HE Ms. Maria Ciobanu,
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Romania
to the United Nations Office in Geneva

**Intergovernmental event at the ministerial-level
of Member States of the United Nations 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

Intergovernmental event at the ministerial-level of Member States of the United Nations 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

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Mr. Chairperson,
High Commissioner,
Distinguished guests and colleagues,

I am honoured to address the distinguished audience at this particular event of commemoration and I wish to express my gratitude to High Commissioner Guterres for his able stewardship over this agency, and also for his heartfelt opening statement.

From the very start, we join the calls for promoting wide accession to UNHCR core instruments. The 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol remain the corner stone of the international refugee law. These are two basic documents which almost all countries represented here today have been using, by their own will, to protect refugees, to resolve their problems, to safeguard their rights and well-being.

The protracted refugee situations, the large gap in meeting the resettlement needs, the multiplication of conflicts - to name just a few of the current operational challenges - are placing a tremendous strain on UNHCR capacity.

This UN Agency is at the forefront of the global efforts to tackle these serious problems, but its efficiency is highly dependent on Member States' political and financial support. Hence, we salute the opportunity offered by the UNHCR pledging process and we hope all our political commitments would turn into action. In this regard, the Romanian Government has submitted a set of national pledges which reaffirm our determination to protect and assist persons in need.

Mr. Chairperson,

Given the magnitude of statelessness worldwide and its often overlooked impact, we commend the Agency for stepping up its actions against this phenomenon.

The Romanian authorities have engaged in a dialogue with the local UNHCR office on opportunities to improve the national legislation and practice regarding statelessness. An internal reflection process on possible further actions was initiated as a result of the *Conference on statelessness* held in Bucharest in November 2010, with the participation of governmental representatives, national and international experts.

Romania has also made important progress in developing its institutional and legal framework in the area of protecting refugees and asylum seekers, as well as in taking part in responsibility-sharing in the humanitarian field. The UNHCR has been a reliable partner along the way.

We will further work to improve the quality of the national asylum procedure and our integration programmes. In this regard, Romania has successfully participated to the UNHCR-led *Quality Initiatives* in Central and Southern Europe, co-funded by the EU.

Although Romania is not a “common” destination country for migrants, it has experienced a rise of asylum requests during the last years.

Against the backdrop of the increased migratory flow generated by the latest events in Northern Africa and Middle East, in September this year, a new accommodation centre for asylum seekers was opened near the Southern border, with an occupancy capacity of 100 places.

Moreover, in line with our pro-active approach on international protection matters, we are considering the adoption of a bill to approve a new national resettlement programme.

Mr. Chairperson,

As part of our burden-sharing efforts, allow me to recall the activity of the Emergency Transit Centre, in the city of Timisoara, the first of its kind in the world.

The emergency evacuation proved to be a feasible mechanism offering safety to endangered groups and we are pleased to see that similar structures have been created elsewhere.

In order to share our experience, we have organized – two days ago, on 6 December - together with two friendly countries – the Slovak Republic and the Philippines – a Round table on Emergency Transit Facilities, as good examples of sharing responsibility for the international protection of refugees. In order to properly overtake operational challenges, such projects rely on the close cooperation of different partners, in particular the resettlement states.

With this event, our countries wished not only to contribute to the current commemoration activities, but to support the UNHCR call on the international community to put forth tools for the protection of refugees in emergency situations.

Mr. Chairperson,

60 years is a respectable timeframe of long-enduring activity. Yet, we should not only look back on our achievements, we have to look into the future with renewed vigour, and offer our support for the next years of work.

I thank you.