

**Opening Remarks to Launch the 2017 World Refugee Day Events Co-organized by**

**Indonesia's Directorate General for Immigration and UNHCR:**

**Refugee Performances and Partner Contributions**

**Jakarta, Indonesia 24 July 2017**

Bapak Agung Sampurno, Head of Public Relations and Domestic Affairs for the Directorate General for Immigration,

Your Excellences from the Diplomatic Corps,

Colleagues from UN agencies and partners,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

*Selamat pagi* and welcome to all of you with us today. Your presence here shows your support in standing together with refugees everywhere.

As you may know, every year, World Refugee Day is marked with various activities around the world to raise awareness about refugees and to inspire people and communities to mobilize and come together to help them. This

year, UNHCR Indonesia has collaborated with partners like all of you here today to organize numerous events, which actually began in early June.

UNHCR is very honored that you have joined us for this particular event this morning. It is the second day of a two-day event the Directorate General of Immigration and UNHCR have organized to commemorate World Refugee Day 2017, which we are doing under the banner of “Celebrating the Diversity of Refugees.”

Yesterday we had a panel discussion with the Director General of Immigration Bapak Ronny Sompie and other key officials from the Coordinating Ministry of Politics, Law and Security, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Home Affairs, to discuss moving forward with implementing a comprehensive law on refugees. This law was signed by President Joko Widodo in the last days of 2016 and has become effective this year. It is officially known as Presidential Regulation 125 of 2016. We are very grateful to the Government of Indonesia for reaffirming through this new law its commitment to providing a safe place for refugees as we all work together to find longer-term solutions for them.

Today we continue the event with a focus on refugees in Indonesia and the many skills and talents they bring to their host communities. In a very significant way, they reflect the same diversity of this great country. We will

also honor several partners that have shown a true humanitarian spirit by helping refugees.

I have had the pleasure and the honor to work in Indonesia for over two years now. In fact, in October, it will be three years. I am as much struck today as I was when I first arrived to take up my assignment here how expansive and diverse this county is — 17,000 islands, with over 360 ethnic groups who between them speak over 700 different languages. And you also have a long humanitarian tradition of welcoming refugees. Today there are just over 14,000 refugees from some 40 different countries who are all protected by the humanitarian spirit of this great and diverse nation.

We can see with all the refugees here today, and the exhibits set up in the entrance to the theater, the diverse talents of refugees. Among them there are artists, doctors, engineers, teachers, and agricultural specialists to name a few. They all have something to contribute to society. Just like the millions of refugees before them. People with such diverse talents and skills as Nobel-Prize recipient and physicist Albert Einstein, former US Secretary of State Madeline Albright, lead singer of the pop group Queen, Freddy Mercury, other entertainers such as Gloria Estefan and Rita Ora, Google co-founder Sergey Brin, professional footballer Febrice Muamba, renowned writer Isabel Allende,

and of course Anne Frank, whose acclaimed diary remains an indelible symbol for the protection of human rights.

Just think about it: If these millions of people had not been welcomed by a country where they could find safe haven, it would have been an unforgivable tragedy for the good of the world.

This new law in Indonesia indeed provides an example for many other countries in South East Asia and beyond on how important it is to take a humanitarian approach towards refugees — people who have been forced to flee their home countries because of war and persecution. Provisions allowing access to asylum and rescue at sea of those in distress are just a few of the reasons the International Community can look to Indonesia as a country that is doing right by refugees, and also migrants.

For now, I would just reiterate how pleased we at UNHCR are to be part of this event with the Directorate General of Immigration and all of you here today.

We proudly join you in celebrating the diversity of refugees - their diverse talents, their diverse skills, and the diverse gifts that each and every one of them can bring to this amazingly diverse country of Indonesia.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, terima kasih and enjoy the activities.

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Presentation at the WRD event with DGI

1. Global refugee crisis:

-unprecedented numbers, with wars continuing and forcing people to flee for their lives

-resettlement options shrinking in traditional resettlement countries

2. Government of Indonesia is taking a lead in addressing the crisis in the region:

-working to help solve problems in the region (Myanmar's Rakhine state) and beyond (Gulf States, with Qatar) that are or could generating refugees

AND at home: long tradition of hosting refugees thereby doing its part in sharing responsibilities and now with the new refugee law, reaffirming its long humanitarian tradition of hosting refugees and allowing them to stay until longer-term solutions can be found for them.

3. Current statistics: Indonesia compared to other countries

-Number of refugees in Asia

-Indonesia is sharing the responsibility of helping refugees by hosting over 14,000

4. The law (offers opportunities for Indonesia not only to protect refugees, but also to create benefits for local host communities and enhance national security) :

-registration and documentation (enhance national security and protection of refugees (no confusion between refugees and other foreigners; DGI and UNHCR can help each other keep track of refugees and their movements. This will be all the more important as refugees are transferred from one IDC to another.) UNHCR has a computerized data system in place with biometrics and other fraud-proof features - is looking at improving features even more, with plans to issue new cards and has rolled out a card-verification system on line that immigration authorities can use to verify the authenticity of documentation; This is the perfect time to share these systems with DGI, as it looks to implement its mandated responsibilities under the new law. With this in mind, UNHCR is discussing a structured way of sharing data with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which it has introduced to the Desk;

- refugees with special skills that may be needed by host communities;

Teaching English, Arabic and other languages; Agricultural or mechanical engineers;

- Joint labour schemes between refugees and local Indonesian entrepreneurs, types of small businesses in which refugees and locals can team up to create a business that complements their talents;

- Community improvements (quick impact projects), providing improvements to mosques and other religious establishments, expanding toilets and other sanitary facilities in neighborhoods that are hosting refugees;

-protection at sea (serves as a model for regional cooperation, UNHCR through its Maritime Movements Unit can monitor and share information on boat movements and possibly movements by air and land);

-alternatives to detention: I was struck at an event organized last week by the Coordinating Ministry by the representative of the DGI noting that the law provides a mechanism for detention facilities to revert to their intended purpose instead of accommodating refugees. Everyone at the meeting acknowledged that the increasingly overcrowded situation in detention facilities is unsustainable. For eg. Kalideres IDC is severely overcrowded partly because it is accommodating a large number of refugees and asylum-seekers. This is in spite of a mechanism under immigration regulations in which refugees and asylum seekers who are women and children are to be transferred to community accommodations. There was agreement that it would be good to find ways to streamline the process of transfer to such sites so that the transfers can be made as swiftly as possible. UNHCR stands ready to assist, as this remains a major challenge;

-special needs of children and other vulnerable groups, the law provides for special procedures to be put in place for vulnerable groups to be handled under special procedures that account for the special situation of vulnerable groups. Children are of course particularly vulnerable to exploitation, especially if they are without their parents and/or in detention; Under the current system in place, there are over xx children in detention, xx of them are without their parents. UNHCR is particularly concerned with their situation, including the possibly irreversible psychological impact that detention could have on them. We need to find a way for these children to be released to shelters and other arrangements that could meet their needs. UNHCR has supported the establishment of five special

shelters for refugee children who are without their parents, some of which have also been supported by donor countries. IOM has also worked with the Ministry of Social Affairs to open and operate similar sites.

Great opportunities under this law that serve to inspire other countries in the region.