

CONCLUSIONS OF THE 6TH MEETING OF THE QUADRIPARTITE STEERING COMMITTEE

Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees to Support Voluntary Repatriation, Sustainable Reintegration and Assistance to Host Countries

Islamabad, Pakistan, 17 June 2019

The sixth meeting of the Quadripartite Steering Committee, hosted and chaired by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, was held on 17 June 2019 in Islamabad, Pakistan. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss developments and challenges in the implementation of the multi-year regional Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR) to Support Voluntary Repatriation, Sustainable Reintegration and Assistance to Host Countries and to improve the implementation mechanisms and coordinated efforts towards this end, with a focus on enhancing voluntary repatriation as one of the objectives where efforts and approach can be further improved;

The Governments of the Islamic Republics of Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) were present at the meeting. Hon. Sayed Hussain Alemi Balkhi, Minister of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR), represented the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan; Hon. Hossein Zolfaghari, Deputy Minister of Interior for Security and Disciplinary Affairs, represented the Islamic Republic of Iran; Hon. Shehryar Khan Afridi, Minister of State for States and Frontier Regions, represented the Islamic Republic of Pakistan; and the UNHCR was represented by its Director of the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, Indrika Ratwatte.

All parties expressed appreciation to the Government of Pakistan for hosting and chairing the meeting.

The parties of the Quadripartite Steering Committee:

Recalled that 2019 marks the fortieth year since the beginning of large-scale Afghan refugee inflow into Pakistan and Iran and in this context *agreed* to extend the SSAR until December 2021, extendable, as the valid framework and to enhance its implementation as an enabling multilateral platform for facilitating voluntary repatriation, coordination and engaging actors to identify and implement comprehensive responses in support of lasting solutions for Afghan refugees in the region, including voluntary repatriation and sustainable reintegration as the most viable and preferred solution; and *proposed* to conduct periodic stock-taking of achievements and progress made in the implementation of the SSAR as part of efforts to attain tangible results;

Reaffirmed their commitment to the principle of voluntary repatriation in safety and dignity, and urged enhanced joint efforts to create an environment conducive to orderly voluntary return and sustainable reintegration in Afghanistan, as well as to continue to more appropriately support host communities in the Islamic Republics of Iran and Pakistan, within the SSAR framework;

Appreciated the hospitality of the Islamic Republics of Iran and Pakistan in providing the necessary protection and significant support to Afghan refugees for nearly four decades and for providing access to national services, particularly healthcare and education, and livelihoods; despite the host countries' limitations;

Appreciated the Government of Pakistan for allowing Afghan Refugees to open bank accounts and to access the banking channels, which will greatly facilitate their temporary stay and businesses, pending their return;

Reaffirmed the need for the international community, the Government of Afghanistan and UNHCR to undertake time bound measures, in a tangible manner, to facilitate voluntary repatriation and

sustainable reintegration of refugees in Afghanistan, while adhering to the voluntary nature of returns;

Appreciated the voluntary efforts of the Governments of the Islamic Republics of Iran and Pakistan to register and document Afghan nationals residing on their territories, and to regulate legal cross-border movements taking into account the other aspects including security dimension, and *encouraged* the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to expand and expedite the issuance of civil documentation and machine readable passports to their nationals;

The Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan underscores the urgency upon the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to facilitate the return of the undocumented Afghan nationals and ACC holders within the understanding reached under another relevant forum which is being utilized for that purpose;

The Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran noted that Afghan nationals with passports reside in Iran with visas issued by Iran and undocumented Afghan citizens who have been head counted by the Government of Iran are also residing in Iran; and encouraged the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to enhance the capacity of the Afghan missions in Iran to expedite the issuance of national passports;

Appreciated the initiative of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan through the establishment of the Displacement and Return Executive Committee (DiREC) and the effort to pursue the objectives of the SSAR; as well as regular updates from the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan on progress achieved;

Welcome the initiative of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, UNHCR and other partners to promote targeted development interventions in fifteen areas of high return and reintegration in Afghanistan, recognizing the importance of strengthening the self-reliance of returnees and their host communities, particularly youth; and *recognize the need* to strengthen cross-border coordination in support of these initiatives, including through education, youth empowerment, vocational skills training and livelihood opportunities to build the human capital;

Stressed the need for data-gathering in Afghanistan, while data could be shared by concerned stakeholders, wherever appropriate, to support reintegration programs in Afghanistan;

Expressed concern that while the SSAR remains the valid framework, development actors and other partners are urged to provide adequate, tangible and predictable support and assistance in support of the implementation of the SSAR;

Stressed the importance of addressing the protection needs of returnee children and youth, who constitute more than half of the Afghan refugee population, particularly through ensuring access to civil documentation;

Committed to working together to ensure the smooth enrollment of children and youth in national education programs upon their return to Afghanistan including by ensuring the acceptance of education certificates issued in the Islamic Republics of Pakistan and Iran;

Committed to enhanced joint advocacy and resource mobilization efforts within the framework of the SSAR Joint Resource Mobilization Strategy (JRMS); and *underlined* the importance of more equitable and predictable responsibility-sharing by the international community in supporting refugees and working towards voluntary repatriation and sustainable reintegration, supporting host countries, as well as expanding access to solutions in third countries, including resettlement;

Referred to the Global Compact on Refugees, affirmed by the UN General Assembly in December 2018, and *underlined* its over-arching principle to operationalize the commitments of burden- and responsibility-sharing to better protect and assist refugees and returnees and support host countries and communities, as well as Afghanistan;

Further *referred* to the main objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees to ease the pressure on host countries and communities, enhance refugee self-reliance, expand access to solutions in third countries, and support conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity and sustainable reintegration; and *noted* the complementarity of these objectives with those of the SSAR. Based on this, *discussed* opportunities for forging commitments of more equitable burden-sharing and solidarity for the Afghan displacement situation in preparation for the first Global Refugee Forum to be held in December 2019;

Note that the UNHCR has made a proposal to establish a support platform for the SSAR to mobilize resources in support of the objectives of the Global Compact.

Encouraged continued dialogue between Afghanistan and the host countries to secure solutions for Afghan refugees, including through the established Quadripartite and Tripartite frameworks and the full and effective implementation of the SSAR within the agreed time frame of December 2021, extendable.

**For the Islamic Republic of
Afghanistan**

**Hon. Sayed Hussain Alemi
Balkhi, Minister of Refugees
and Repatriation**

**For the Islamic Republic of
Iran**

**Hon. Hossein Zolfaghari,
Deputy Minister of
Interior for Security and
Disciplinary Affairs**

**For the Islamic Republic of
Pakistan**

**Hon. Shehryar Khan Afridi,
Minister of State for States
and Frontier Regions**

**For the UN High
Commissioner for Refugees**

**Indrika Ratwatta
Regional Bureau Director for
Asia and the Pacific**