



STATEMENT BY THE UNITED NATIONS VOLUNTEERS (UNV) PROGRAMME **ON THE OCCASION OF THE SIXTIETH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE** **COMMITTEE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME**

GENEVA, SEPTEMBER 2009

Mr. Chairperson, distinguished delegates, UN colleagues, ladies and gentlemen.

On behalf of the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme and its Executive Coordinator, Ms. Flavia Pansieri, and all UNV volunteers serving all over the world, I have the honour and pleasure to address you on the occasion of this historic Sixtieth Session of the Executive Committee of UNHCR.

Let me begin by thanking the High Commissioner for his strategic leadership of UNHCR. At the same time, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the outgoing Deputy High Commissioner Mr. Craig Johnstone for leading UNHCR's internal restructuring process. UNV also welcomes Ms. Janet Lim as the Assistant High Commissioner for Operations and looks forward to working with her.

The High Commissioner's identification of emerging mega trends is truly visionary and path-breaking. Population growth; urbanization; climate change; food, water and energy insecurity; and migration are indeed a global reality and need a global response. In addition, as the High Commissioner also pointed out, the global financial and economic crisis could reverse years of collective poverty reduction efforts and undermine the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Therefore, there is an urgent need to implement UNHCR's global strategic priorities. UNV fully supports these strategic priorities to deliver life-saving assistance, ensure protection, expand access to education and livelihoods in protracted emergency situations, strengthen protection capacity for mixed migration, respond to urban refugees, ensure emergency preparedness and response, and facilitate long-term solutions.

As we heard during the general debate, there are many challenges facing UNHCR in its operating environment and shrinking humanitarian and asylum space, combined with tragic threats to staff security. However, with the excellent support from developing country hosts and promising developments and solutions on urban refugees and the Global Plan of Action on protracted refugee situations, UNV is confident that UNHCR will be able to creatively and proactively address these challenges.

Today, 10 and a half million refugees worldwide are under UNHCR's responsibility and 14 and half million IDPs benefited from its protection and assistance activities – this is a very big task and duty indeed. UNV salutes UNHCR's tireless efforts and is happy to be a partner in this effort. Our volunteers are proud of working hand-in-hand with UNHCR all over the world. In Sudan, UNV volunteers work as Field Officers, Protection Officers, Community Services Officers, Health and Nutrition Coordinators, Water and Sanitation Officers, Livelihoods Officers, Infrastructure Officers, Repatriation Officers, Statisticians and Supply Chain/Logistics Officers. In Syria they work with UNHCR as Registration Officers and Resettlement Officers at the country's largest registration centre for Iraqis fleeing from violence in their homeland, and thirty national UNV volunteers are at the forefront of efforts to help the victims of this sad conflict in the Middle East. And in Colombia UNV volunteers work with UNHCR as Legal Officers and Field Officers.



On behalf of all UNV volunteers and staff, I would like to congratulate the High Commissioner upon reaching a milestone in our joint deployment of over 1,000 UNV volunteers in 74 countries in 2008 – half of whom were women, I am happy to say. I am encouraged that over the past five years, the number of UNV volunteers with UNHCR has been steadily increasing at an average of 11 percent per year, from 677 assignments in 2004 to 1064 in 2008. UNV volunteers made up 14 percent of all UNHCR personnel in the field in 2008.

UNHCR has recently undergone a successful internal change process, and UNV is looking to draw lessons from it. The objective of our own change process called “Changing Together” is to orient our programme support and operations around UNV’s overarching goal of “Contributing to Peace and Development through Volunteerism”. Through the twin pillars of “Peace” and “Development”, we aim to more efficiently and effectively work with our partners such as UNHCR in the continuum from emergency humanitarian response, to protracted humanitarian support, and on to early recovery and sustainable development. One early result of our change process is the creation of one Volunteer Resources Team to carry out volunteer identification and recruitment-related functions to better serve our clients as a “one-stop shop”. This was formerly done by three different organizational units in Germany and Cyprus.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Free will, commitment, engagement and solidarity are the foundation of volunteerism and of UNV. Volunteerism serves the cause of peace and development by enhancing opportunities for participation by all, particularly women and girls. Since it started operations in 1970, UNV has supported the UN system by mobilizing volunteers for peace and development all over the world. Almost 8,000 volunteer assignments were undertaken in 2008 alone.

UNV looks forward to increase its programmatic collaboration with UNHCR, especially to integrate volunteerism into “One UN” initiatives. There are many convergences between UNHCR’s and UNV’s strategic priorities. Some of the areas where UNV can add value to and complement UNHCR’s important work with its population of concern are recovery, sustainable livelihoods, gender, environment and climate change, access to education, and local governance.

In its Resolution 63/153 of February 2009, the General Assembly has designated UNV as the focal point for the follow-up to the International Year of Volunteers (IYV). The General Assembly also decided that, on or around 5 December 2011 – the International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development – two plenary meetings of the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly will be devoted to follow-up on the International Year and the commemoration of its tenth anniversary under the item entitled “Social development”. This discussion will be especially relevant in the lead-up to 2015, the target date for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Therefore, UNV seeks the support of UNHCR, UN agencies, civil society partners and programme countries in the preparations for 2011 and beyond, and in raising awareness about the contribution of volunteerism to peace and development.

Thank you.

Naheed Haque

Deputy Executive Coordinator

United Nations Volunteers