

**Statement by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for  
Refugees (UNHCR)**

**On the occasion of the Executive Board of the United Nations Development  
Programme and of the United Nations Population Fund Annual Session 2010  
Palais des Nations, Conference room XVIII**

**30 June 2010**

**Mr. President,**

On behalf of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. Antonio Guterres and his office, I have the honor of addressing this Annual Session of the Executive Board of UNDP and UNFPA on the subject of the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme.

Collaboration between UNV and UNHCR dates back to the early 1990s and has been expanding progressively over the years as humanitarian crises continue to unfold. During 2009, UNHCR continued to build this valued partnership with UNV. In fact, UNHCR is UNV's third largest partner, behind only DPKO and UNDP.

Over the past ten years, the number of UNV volunteers deployed with UNHCR has tripled. In 2000, there were 362 UNV volunteers deployed in 46 UNHCR country operations, whereas in 2009 over 1,000 UNV volunteers were deployed in 76 country operations. UNV volunteers represent about 17 percent of the UNHCR workforce in the field. Almost half of those deployed are women. In addition, the number of national UNV volunteers working with UNHCR in their own countries continues to rise, and represent almost 50 percent of all our UNV volunteers.

**Mr. President**

UNV works in partnership with UNHCR to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees, internally displaced persons, and other persons of concern. UNV volunteers provide critical support to UNHCR to carry out its mandate of providing protection, enabling community services, identifying durable solutions and

implementing programmes that provide life-sustaining assistance to persons of concern.

In collaboration with UNV in 2009, 15 international UNV volunteers fully-funded by several donor governments were deployed in UNHCR operations in support of field offices. UNV and UNHCR are also collaborating on the deployment of UNV volunteers trained by the Hiroshima Peace Building Centre of Hiroshima University, and generously funded by the Government of Japan. Four of these “peace builders” are currently deployed in Jordan, Kenya and Sudan.

In 2009, UNHCR benefited from the UNV Online Volunteering Service and promoted its use through its field offices. For instance, UNHCR’s Regional Office for Latin America mobilized more than 80 UNV online volunteers in 2009 who provided outstanding support to develop the Spanish and Portuguese versions of the UNHCR website.

UNHCR and UNV also work together on the promotion of volunteerism. Last year for International Volunteer Day on 5 December. UNHCR supported UNV’s “Volunteering for our Planet” campaign in an effort to raise public awareness of the role of voluntary action for community-level environmental action. UNHCR also participated in a consultative meeting on preparations for the tenth anniversary of the International Year of Volunteers, to be marked throughout 2011. The meeting, hosted by UNV, resulted in a Global Call for Action that encouraged all stakeholders to reinvigorate the spirit of the International Year of Volunteers (2001) and to promote recognition of the contributions of volunteers to society, and to global peace and development. Every year UNHCR mobilizes thousands of volunteers around World Refugee Day on the 20th of June who organizes advocacy events in more than 100 countries. However, the voluntary action of refugees and displaced persons themselves is often largely under-appreciated. Without the volunteer effort and the volunteer spirit of self-organisation and civic engagement, our global efforts to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide would not be viable. The IYV+10 2011 will be an opportunity to highlight this intangible yet indispensable contribution of volunteers.

**Mr. President,**

The year 2011 is an important year for both UNV and for UNHCR. It simultaneously marks the tenth anniversary of the International Year of Volunteers, the 50th anniversary of the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, UNVs 40th anniversary and UNHCR's 60th anniversary. This is a good opportunity to further build upon the programmatic synergy between UNHCR and UNV, focusing on protection activities for stateless persons as a key component of the 2011 celebrations, and to particularly highlight the key role of volunteers and volunteerism during World Refugee Day in 2011.

I would further like to propose, as a possible area of collaboration between UNHCR and UNV, to work together on a stakeholder analysis to identify those actors already involved in or who potentially could be involved in efforts to address the very important issue of statelessness. UNHCR's guidance on participatory, community-based and rights-based approaches applies to all populations of concern, including to stateless populations. State institutions such as legislative bodies, ministries, local authorities, the judiciary, and national human rights institutions all have a major influence on any statelessness situation. These authorities are often not the same as those responsible for forced displacement issues, therefore effective responses by UNHCR and partners may require developing additional relationships. A careful stakeholder analysis may reveal that some State actors seek international support to address issues relating to statelessness.

The UNHCR Executive Committee has also requested that UNHCR cooperate with other United Nations agencies and international organizations as well as relevant regional and non-governmental organizations to address statelessness. We would like to count on UNV's support when providing assistance to these individuals, when confirming their nationality, and when promoting, on their behalf, the application of the provisions of the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

**Mr. President**

UNHCR and UNV have similar objectives and our two organizations are planning greater programmatic collaboration in several areas. In the global context of international finance, with its negative impact on contributions, UNHCR will

cooperate with partners such as UNV to find creative solutions for populations of concern. In assessing the essential needs of these populations and in the delivery of basic services, UNV volunteers are expected to play a key role. In the field of durable solutions, UNV volunteers could also contribute to the empowerment and local acceptance of populations under UNHCR's mandate. As mentioned at that start of my intervention, the partnership with UNV is an important one and we will continue to explore with UNV new ways and means to further strengthen our collaboration in the coming years.

In concluding my statement, and on behalf of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and his office, I thank you for the invitation to contribute to this occasion, and wish you a very fruitful deliberation.

Thank you, **Mr. President.**