

UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY – THIRD COMMITTEE

ITEM 41:

REPORT OF THE UNHCR

STATEMENT

BY

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. Chairman

We commend the High Commissioner for Refugees and his staff for their continued dedication to relieve the plight of refugees, internally displaced persons and stateless persons. We welcome the report before the Committee and in particular the focus on the often forgotten protracted refugee situations. To live in provisional circumstances over a prolonged period of time adds particular psychological burden on the people affected, especially if it is compounded by the absence of a prospect for a durable solution. In this context, we welcome the UNHCR's approach to promote different kinds of durable solutions for refugees and displaced persons on an equal footing. The first step out of a prolonged period of dependency and vulnerability must be a real choice between a safe and dignified return, local reintegration or resettlement.

Mr. Chairman

Liechtenstein is concerned about the 26 million persons currently displaced within their country for reasons of armed conflict. To establish a secure environment and to bring assistance to the affected population is a major humanitarian challenge for intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. We urge all parties to conflicts to facilitate the work of relevant organizations in this field, in particular of the ICRC and the UNHCR, and to provide for the humanitarian space that is necessary to carry out their operations effectively. Unconditional and immediate access to refugees and IDPs must be granted under all circumstances. Where refugees and displaced persons must be accommodated in provisional camps or settlements, parties to conflict must respect their fundamental rights, including the freedom of movement, and must guarantee the civilian and humanitarian character of these camps and settlements at all times. A systematic violation of the freedom of movement enhances the vulnerability of displaced persons and refugees, contributes to the social destabilization in camps and therefore poses long-term security risks. Parties to conflict are responsible for the internal and external safety and security of camps. This includes the responsibility to protect refugee and IDP camps from any

kind of rearmament or militarization and from attempts at recruitment among the refugees or IDPs, in particular where children are targeted. It also includes the responsibility to protect camp inhabitants from violence, in particular from sexual and gender based violence which is a rampant problem in numerous situations of displacement. Parties to conflict must hold perpetrators accountable in order to put an end to the widespread climate of impunity for such crimes.

Mr. Chairman

We should take the 60th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions as a reminder that their provisions have been routinely disrespected in many conflict situations of the recent past. At the time of their conception the Conventions and their Additional Protocols represented a major step by establishing fundamental rules for armed conflicts. The continuous violations of these rules are a major concern for us. Still, parties to conflicts often do not provide for a safe possibility for civil populations to leave areas of conflict. Still, humanitarian access to refugees and internally displaced persons is frequently denied, sometimes as part of a policy. Still, and even more frequently, humanitarian actors that help to assist those who escaped the battlefield are attacked. Liechtenstein expresses its deepest condolences to the families of the UNHCR-workers who died while carrying out their duties. We deplore UNHCR's assessment that balancing staff security with uninterrupted humanitarian action has become more challenging in the light of threats against UN workers being on the rise. In this context Liechtenstein strongly condemns last week's deadly attacks in Kabul killing five UN workers and leaving many seriously injured.

Mr. Chairman

We are very concerned about the perspective of a fast growing number of displaced persons as a result of the negative consequences of climate change and due to natural disasters. My delegation has devoted particular consideration to the recent UNHCR-study on climate change, natural disasters and human displacement and is

alarmed by the projection that climate change will, over time, generate larger and more complex movements of population, within and across borders, and contribute to a considerable increase in the number of stateless persons. We support the view that more attention needs to be paid to future humanitarian and displacement challenges provoked by climate change. This also includes the consideration of the legal status of persons who are obliged to leave their usual place of residence as a result of long-term climate change or sudden natural disasters. These persons are in need of protection under international law and entitled to full humanitarian support where needed. While preparing for the negative consequences of climate change and the future challenges resulting thereof, we must be conscious of the man-made root causes that underlie these sinister humanitarian prospects when we meet for the crucial negotiations on climate change in Copenhagen later this year. Only a substantial agreement will put us in a position where the humanitarian challenges awaiting us can receive the serious consideration we owe them.

I thank you.