



**Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the UN
Geneva**

Statement

89th Session of the Standing Committee of UNHCR

**Statement by H.E. Zaman Mehdi
Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative of Pakistan**

**Agenda Item 3 (v) : Regional Activities and Global Programmes
Asia and the Pacific**

(1000-1300 hrs on 14 March 2024)

**Chairperson,
Deputy High Commissioner,
Excellencies,
Dear Colleagues,**

To begin with, my delegation would like to felicitate Ms. Hai Kyung Jun on assuming the role as Director of the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific.

Pakistan also congratulates UNHCR for a successful Global Refugee Forum in December 2023, which achieved a milestone of nearly 1700 pledges including, among others, financial commitments of USD 2.2 billion and many other innovative partnerships.

Amid tumultuous global humanitarian landscape, a true transformative impact of the GRF is now contingent on putting the burden and responsibility sharing into action and ensuring a time bound and effective implementation of these pledges.

Madam Chair,

The traditions of compassion, generosity and protection of the vulnerable, are deeply rooted in social and cultural values of the Pakistani society.

For the past four decades, Pakistan has been a top refugee and migrant hosting country.

Over these years, Pakistan has experienced intermittent returns and circular inflows of Afghan nationals triggered by conflict and socio-economic drivers in Afghanistan.

This complex situation has resulted in different streams of Afghans arriving in Pakistan. There are Afghans who are refugees, there are migrants residing for education, medical and work purposes. And then, there are individuals that have exploited the *laissez passez* generosity of Pakistan and are residing illegally in contravention of local laws.

In 2021, following the hasty withdrawal by international forces from Afghanistan, Pakistan received another huge influx of Afghans who were promised resettlement to third countries by some foreign governments. We await to see progress on this track.

Any sovereign country could contemplate the administrative and governance challenges linked with such mixed inflows.

Addressing such challenges under distinctive approaches for migrants and refugees is critical to protect the normative terrain of international refugee regime.

A combination of above challenges and precarious security situation provided the backdrop of the government's efforts to a long overdue administrative step to manage illegal migration through implementation of Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan.

Pakistan values its partnership with UNHCR to address such challenges, and appreciates the recent visit of UNHCR delegation to Pakistan to continue ongoing discussions.

**Chair,
Distinguished Colleagues,**

Pakistan takes its obligations under international law seriously.

We have always advocated for a strategic approach on refugee protection as well as durable solutions, not to the extent of rhetoric but also reality.

Pakistan's RAHA (Refugee Affected and Hosting Areas) initiative is globally recognized best practice which caters to both humanitarian and development needs of refugees and host communities.

In addition to the access to basic needs and livelihood opportunities, each year, Pakistan offers thousands of scholarships to Afghan youth enabling them to seek higher education and skills-development programmes in coveted Pakistani universities and institutes with a view to enhancing their accessibility to solutions.

Nearly 40% of such scholarships have been reserved for Afghan women and girls.

These initiatives are in line with the regional SSAR strategy, to which we remain committed.

Pakistan, therefore, appreciates the role of Support Platform of the SSAR and its Core Group in mobilizing international solidarity with Afghan refugees and host communities.

We look forward to discussing all outstanding issues in the next meeting of the SSAR.

Nevertheless, we believe that more can and must be done, especially when after a long time there is an opportunity of solutions within Afghanistan, and UNCHR's Area-Based approach in priority areas of return and reintegration has yielded positive impact.

In this spirit, Pakistan looks forward to working closely with UNHCR and other international partners to advance sustainable solutions for Afghan refugees in tandem with assistance interventions for both refugees and host communities.

I thank you
