



**69th Session of the Executive Committee of the United Nations High
Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)**

Statement by Sri Lanka

Mrs. Samantha Jayasuriya
Deputy Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka

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**The Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka to the United Nations and other International
Organizations in Geneva**

Madam Chairperson,

High Commissioner Mr. Filippo Grandi,

Excellencies and Distinguish Delegates,

Sri Lanka congratulates you for the excellent manner in which you have guided and led the work of the Executive Committee since your election last October. We take this opportunity to thank the Bureau for their contribution and commitment to this forum. We appreciate the insightful presentation by High Commissioner Grandi. His presentation has reflected upon the global developments in involuntary displacements and associated challenges in international protection.

Sri Lanka appreciates the invaluable role of the UNHCR and pay tribute to its dedicated staff all over the world. Thanks to their dedicated service under trying circumstances, protection along with provision of assistance and durable solutions are ensured for over 70 million persons of concern in the world today.

Madam Chairperson,

Let me take this opportunity to express deep sympathies and solidarity of the Government and people of Sri Lanka with Indonesia in the wake of the devastating earthquake and tsunami that affected that country last week. The loss of valuable lives and displacement of several thousands of people is a matter of deep pain to us.

Madam Chairperson,

Given that forced displacement from protracted conflicts is on the rise and that a variety of other push factors such as climate change and natural disasters, resource scarcity also contribute to aggravating the situation, there is an increasing need for concerted action and sharing of responsibilities by all, to face the mounting challenges. It is a matter of deep concern that 85% of the global refugee population continues to be hosted by low and middle-income countries. While appreciating the commendable humanitarian tasks undertaken by these host countries, we must pledge our sustained support and commitment for their efforts.

Madam Chairperson,

The agreement reached here in Geneva on the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) is in fact a triumph for multilateralism. It demonstrates the strong willingness and commitment of all stakeholders to find common solutions and to share burden. Although it may be unrealistic to expect the Global Compact to provide the optimum solutions, it has, however, tried to present a delicately balanced, forward looking and sustainable options. We therefore wish to thank the open

and transparent manner in which the co-chairs and UNHCR guided the process of consultations. Nevertheless, given the complex ground realities with regard to human mobility, that are far from what is encompassed in the Compact, certain flexibilities in assistance and meeting the needs of those in distress become crucial. It is pertinent to note that the Compact is addressing the issues related to large scale refugee movements. However, it could often be mixed flows who are using similar routes and encounter similar needs. It is important that such needs must also be responded to at ground level. Further, despite the Compact being not meant for addressing issues related to Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), it becomes an important factor when addressing challenges related to their return and reintegration.

Madam Chairperson,

Having dealt with issues related to internal displacement as well as refugee returnees, Sri Lanka recognizes the challenges associated with return and reintegration. UNHCR's support for protection and shelter for the IDPs in Sri Lanka was a strong compliment to face these challenges and as of date, there is significant progress in finding durable solutions and facilitating return and reintegration of refugees of Sri Lankan origin.

Despite not being a Party to the 1951 Convention on Refugees, the Government is committed to uphold its responsibility according to international norms and principles.

Mr. High Commissioner,

Sri Lanka wishes to acknowledge the cordial and constructive engagement and support from the UN country teams including the UNHCR for its peace building priority plan and we look forward to continuing our engagement.

I thank you Madam Chairperson.