



Statement by H.E. Mr. Ravinatha Aryasinha, Ambassador/Permanent
Representative of Sri Lanka
66th Session of the Executive Committee of the
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
07 October 2015

Mr. Chairman,
High Commissioner Mr. Antonio Guterres,
Excellencies and distinguish delegates,

At the outset Sri Lanka wishes to congratulate you for your able leadership and for the inclusive, open and transparent manner in which you are steering the work of this important meeting. We also note with interest the Opening Statement of the High Commissioner, which provided a detailed overview of the work undertaken by UNHCR and the challenges faced in safeguarding the rights and well-being of millions of individuals be they refugees, internally displaced, asylum seekers or stateless people.

We also appreciate the vision and leadership by the United Nations Secretary-General in steering several important processes ranging from the UN Summit on the Post 2015 Development Agenda adopted last week, to the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul in May next year, where the humanitarian and development aspects related to migration have been placed in focus, highlighting their important inter-linkages.

Mr. Chairman,

In the backdrop of 232 million people seeking migration and another 1 billion considered to be internally displaced around the world, Sri Lanka recognizes the important role performed by the UNHCR in striving to provide protection, assistance and durable solutions to these vulnerable populations. Particularly in the wake of tragedies and difficulties faced by people in many regions of the world, in the recent past and due to ongoing conflicts as well as other push factors for migration such as insecurity, poverty, natural disasters, urbanization, climate change etc, the need for concerted global action has become an urgent imperative. Comprehensive and coherent responses would be required to understand and accept the fact that 'migration is a multidimensional reality of major relevance for the development of countries of origin, transit and destination'. All our countries in an increasingly connected and globalized world grapples with the issue of migration as a origin, transit or destination state or a combination of the above.

Mr. Chairman,

Sri Lanka is of the view that while meeting the immediate humanitarian needs of those who have been forced to migrate, it is imperative to address the root causes as well. Given the changing humanitarian landscape, complexities and the intertwined nature of the root causes ranging from poverty, conflicts, natural disasters, scarcity of resources and livelihood, and security concerns, it is also an obligation of all to prevent human trafficking and related illegal activities. A single country or a region may not be in a position to overcome such crises without the mutual assistance and cooperation of others. The solutions or actions to address root causes need the continuous support and collaboration of the international community. The common political will of the international community is a must in achieving sustainable solutions for the issue of refugees and we hope the forthcoming meetings on Humanitarian Financing, as well as the World Humanitarian Summit would provide a sound platform for such collective action.

Mr. Chairman,

As you are aware, in the last 30 years or so, due to the internal armed conflict that prevailed in Sri Lanka and other social, economic and political reasons, many Sri Lankans left their country by both regular and irregular means. Similarly, many persons have reached Sri Lanka to seek asylum and refugee status. We have been working with UNHCR to seek sustainable solutions for the internally displaced persons in our country and also in facilitating the return of Sri Lankans back to our country since the return of peace. As of 30th June 2015, a total of 796,720 IDPs belonging to 232,652 families were resettled by the GoSL in the Northern and Eastern Provinces following demining in both Provinces.

I would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to UNHCR for the consistent and continuous support to Sri Lanka by UNHCR especially in the resettlement of the internally displaced.

Mr. Chairman,

To protect and improve the lives of millions of people, including, refugees, internally displaced persons, returnees, stateless people, and others of concern, requires a predictable flow of regular funds for the programmes carried out by the UNHCR and burden-sharing by all Member States irrespective of the status of the country. We recognize the challenges faced by the UNHCR in meeting the basic needs of the vulnerable communities and providing them with sustainable solutions, due to the limitations of financial assistance from its regular budget, which has been US \$ 595.9 Million in 2015. This challenge is further intensified with the protection needs that are growing exponentially in all parts of the world. As a committed and responsible partner in the international community, Sri Lanka has contributed a modest voluntary contribution of 10,000 US\$ towards the UNHCR Global Appeal in 2015.

Finally Mr. Chairman, Sri Lanka reaffirms its support to the work of UNHCR.

Thank you