



**Notes – High-Level Meeting on the Support Platform for the Solutions Strategy for
Afghan Refugees**
Online
6 July 2020

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Opening remarks

UNHCR (Filippo Grandi)

- The Afghanistan refugee situation continues to be one of the largest refugee situations in the world and certainly and unfortunately, also one of the most protracted.
- A few months ago, just before the lockdowns started, many of us were in Islamabad, for the conference hosted by the government of Pakistan to observe the 40th anniversary of the



beginning of the Afghan refugee crisis. During these forty years, UNHCR had the privileged to be closely associated with the Afghan refugees and with countries hosting them.

- There are very few other populations in the world with whom UNHCR has such a close historical link, going across generations of Afghans and generations of UNHCR workers, not only with refugees but also with host countries and in particular Iran and Pakistan. It has been truly one of the crises that has shifted my organization.
- We are proud of these partnerships but this pride should not make us forget that 40 years of exile brought an enormous human cost. Millions of lives have been spent searching stability. We now have a third, perhaps in some cases a fourth generation of children in exile.
- This represents for the countries hosting Afghans an incredible responsibility – and let me use that word that we do not like very much but which is also true – It represents a huge burden that has accumulated over the years.
- The impact has been primarily in the region, in Afghanistan and its neighbours, 90% of the Afghan refugees being essentially in Iran and Pakistan, which have been extremely generous hosts. I take this opportunity once again to thank them for the hospitality that they continue to give and they have given through so many decades to this large refugee populations.
- But Afghans have also increasingly become refugee populations in other part of the world. In 2019, they represent the largest group of new arrivals in Turkey and in Europe. At the end of last year, 30% of arrivals on Greek islands were Afghan people.
- Very complex flows, which would be defined in our language as ‘mixed flows’, with many people deserving any form of international protection, among them an increasing number of women with families, travelling alongside others, a symptom perhaps of a deepening crisis.
- On top of this, in the past months, there was the COVID-19 challenge, which has been particularly severe in Southwest Asia and along the routes followed by Afghan refugees.
- This is why talking about the Platform that we had launched last December to find solutions to the plight of Afghan refugees is more important than ever.
- The Support Platform itself is the result, the outcome of the Global Compact Refugees (GCR) but somehow the experience that many of us have had in this region have started well before the GCR. In fact, it represented one of the models by which the GCR was inspired.
- Host countries, Pakistan and Iran, have been very generous with Afghan refugees and their voluntary repatriation (VolRep) to Afghanistan. Their policies have been a model of inclusiveness and often of innovative approaches.
- E.g. on the very substantial investments in education and healthcare made by Iran. We estimate that the literacy rate of Afghan refugees in Iran from the beginning of the exodus 40 years ago, until now, went from 6% to 68%. An amazing achievement due in large part to the very open policies of the Government of Iran encouraging all children to go to school.
- In Pakistan, we have had for a long time program including development partners in areas affected by refugee presence from which benefited over 12 million refugees and nationals.
- The decision to allow bank accounts for Afghan refugees, taken by the current government greatly encouraged financial inclusion, another important aspect promoted by the GCR.
- Countries have been extraordinarily generous, but we should not take this for granted. These efforts must be supported by the international community and supported more because support has declined considerably since the early 90s.
- The Platform launched in December was to support the Solution Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR), which was launched 8 years ago (2012) by my predecessor Mr. Guterres.
- The Strategy is still extremely valid and currently based on a regional approach. It recognizes the impact of forced displacement and hence, the need to involve development actors. It promotes the alignment with national development priorities both in Afghanistan in terms of return and reintegration and in support of host countries and communities.



- It is based on a quadripartite formula, the 3 countries and UNHCR engaging and coordinating. It promoted measures very relevant to the very mixed nature – migration and protection – of the Afghan population movement such as registration, documentation, etc.
- The Platform complement regional efforts made for many years to promote the strategy. The Platform is meant to revitalize international, political, and financial commitments. We hope the membership will be very broad, not just States but also humanitarian, development agencies, UN, NGOs, civil society, IFIs, and private sector.
- We trust the Platform will provide the support that we hope for, financial but also in many other forms: technical assistance, political support, advocacy for rights and solutions.
- Today we promote the core group of States of the Platform. That is why we invited to the meeting States that have a long-term engagement both with Afghanistan and Afghan refugees. We would like this core group to focus on advocacy and resources mobilization.
- Promoting also alignment of bi-lateral and multi-lateral support to Afghanistan with the SSAR pillars: 1. Create conditions for VolRep 2. Promoting livelihoods 3. Supporting host communities and preserving the asylum space in countries where Afghans seek protection.
- We hope core supporters to the Platform will be good examples to others in providing funding. We have shared a [portfolio of projects](#) developed with the 3 countries, a set of examples of projects that we would like to be supported.
- The Support Platform focuses also on Solutions. This is crucial for Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, and other countries beyond, Turkey and many countries in Europe.
- The situation in Afghanistan continues to be very complex from a political and security point of view. We have seen some progress in peace talks, in the political process. If you talk with refugees, return seems to be the main aspiration of most of them. Over 5 million of Afghans have returned in the last decades. 20 years ago, I coordinated one of the largest repatriation movement from neighbouring countries to Afghanistan. We need to restore the momentum for solutions and return. We would like to keep solutions in Afghanistan pro-eminent in our efforts, listening to what refugees have to say.
- We wish the core group to develop focused and targeted investments with a strong geographical focus on what the government of Afghanistan has designated has priority areas of return and reintegration through a whole-of-community approach that benefits those who received their fellow Afghans back.
- COVID-19 has been particularly devastating in the region and continues to be. It is devastating for Afghan refugees because many of them depend on the informal economy and daily wages that disappear so quickly with the situation of lockdown. In addition, host countries are struggling with their own specific economic challenges.
- Even in the midst of the pandemic, Iran and Pakistan have guaranteed access to prevention, testing, treatment of Afghans who were sick in a very inclusive and non-discriminatory approach. This means also further support.
- Call on Member States present today and beyond to join the core group in support of the platform. It is an opportunity for renewed solidarity and galvanized progress toward Solutions. Being inactive will have a high cost, future generations remaining in limbo. Inaction, and worst neglect, will also favour population movements. It is not only a matter of compassion, but in the interest of all to renew efforts to support Afghan refugees.

Afghanistan

- The Government of Afghanistan is firmly committed to ensuring VolRep and sustainable reintegration of all displaced Afghans. The protracted displacement of citizens inside and outside the country, is a major issue and constitutes one of our highest national priority.
- With your support over the years, we have developed a solutions-oriented response that has tentatively improved conditions for the return of refugees and internally displaced Afghans.



- The return of over 5 million Afghan refugees, in addition to 5 million undocumented Afghans since 2002, stick to that reality. Yet, over 2.3 million Afghans registered as refugees and an equal number of undocumented Afghans remain in neighbouring countries.
- We can and must do more to help them achieve their aspirations to return home. The SSAR continues to serve this purpose by providing necessary policies and operational framework.
- A lot has been achieved, yet, more remains to be done to fully implement the objectives and realized the full potential of the Strategy. To bring it to the next level and into the era of the GCR, we must think out of the box and seek new opportunities.
- The Support Platform that the HC and our government jointly launched last December aims to do precisely that, by broadening and deepening the base of partnership, in line with the commitment to broaden responsibility-sharing that we all have subscribed to.
- Our starting point is the international commitment to support Afghanistan to address the root causes of displacement and to enhance the reintegration potential in priority areas of return and reintegration. The scale and complexity of challenges require long-term ambition, we cannot do it through humanitarian approaches alone. Targeted area-based priorities, programs of the Afghan government must complement humanitarian interventions.
- We are extremely encouraged to see the World Bank and other development agencies today. Robust engagement is essential to make a meaningful difference.
- While we move ahead with macro-level reforms and investments that require long-term commitments, we have worked with friends and neighbours (we express our gratitude for generously hosting generations of Afghan refugees), to develop a joint portfolio of projects addressing the most urgent needs in each of our countries, within the SSAR framework.
- In Afghanistan, to respond to all segments of the society, especially women, and community priorities, we are increasing access to education, health services, shelter, and livelihoods.
- While this project represents only a small part of the needs and will not alone resolve the complex challenges ahead, your investments will improve the daily life of communities.
- Your support through direct investments in those projects or by complementary actions will ensure the most efficient and impactful use of resources.
- Afghanistan is committed to implementing solutions to this protracted refugee situations and positive contributions to peace, stability, security, and development.
- We are grateful for your long-standing support and partnership and ask you to continue, particularly now. At a time of critical junctions, we need to seek opportunities.
- To this end, we reiterate the HC call and encourage you to join the core group.
- Expecting all to join, so we can jointly work for a better future, a strong commitment for stability, development and return. Together we can have a better tomorrow.

Pakistan

- Pakistan is part of the peace and reconciliation efforts in Afghanistan.
- Pakistan, like other stakeholders, emphasize a comprehensive Afghan-led peace process and urgent investments in the 20 priority areas of return and reintegration in Afghanistan. We consider it as the most important factor in resolving the Afghan refugees issue.
- Pakistan is hosting millions of Afghan refugees and citizens and has provided protection, livelihoods, education and health facilities to them for 4 decades.
- Despite that 25 million local children are out of school. In Pakistan, we provide free and equal access to Afghan refugee children in all government schools.
- Afghan youth are provided thousands scholarships for high professional education.
- Extensive training and skills relevant programs are provided, as well as free health coverage to all refugees and Afghan nationals.



- Pakistan is ranked low on the human development index. We have limited resources, but have never discriminated between our Afghan brothers and our own citizens.
- Afghan refugees have been working in all economic fields, except the government sector. They have been further supported to open bank account by relaxing our rules. We provide equal subsidies to Afghan refugees in food and energy sectors. We have extended our hospitality to provide access to jobs, business and services for refugees.
- This has created concerns among the local population, who compete with refugees for job opportunities. There are problems with transport and housing. Refugees presence near forests has also led to deforestation and loss of livestock in those areas.
- We must realize that protecting Afghan refugees, given the important challenges, including COVID-19, is more complex. Uncertainties under the pandemic have made it more difficult.
- Pakistan has raised the Afghan situation issue in every fora, including the GRF in December 2019 and during the Islamabad conference, which renewed the GRF commitments and encouraged to identify pledges which are relevant to the Afghan refugee situation.
- The GCR and the GRF emphasize the need to strengthen existing partnerships, broaden and diversify the support base and the engagement of non-traditional donors, development agencies, private sector.
- The significant decline in support for the two principal host countries was also observed and more efforts must be done for equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing.
- At the conference, the *Afghan-Pakistan Action Plan for Peace and Solidarity* was also acknowledged as a useful forum of bilateral engagement between Afghanistan and Pakistan with regards to Afghan refugees.
- Sustainable peace and development can only be achieved through timely humanitarian and development assistance along with peace efforts, including repatriation of refugees.
- The SSAR underscores that the most viable solution to the Afghan refugees issue is about repatriation and sustainable reintegration in Afghanistan.
- Concerted efforts should be made to create necessary pool factors inside Afghanistan, provide security, shelter and livelihoods.
- As highlighted at the Islamabad conference, there is a need for time bound, well-resourced and mutually agreed terms to achieve repatriation and reintegration. We think it is achievable through the Afghan reconciliation process for a better future for Afghanistan and for the gradual return of refugees.
- The SSAR could play an important and decisive role in achieving this objective as well as assisting host communities. It must, however, ensure we put in place a mechanism where we could monitor this forum's progress, so that it delivers the commitments.
- The pandemic affected all the sectors of Afghans' lives, especially daily wages.
- We intend to continue, along with UNHCR, to cover at least 100,000 refugee families and extend to other Afghan segments. Funding from the donor community will be required.
- We also distributed more than 23,000 ration bags among Afghan refugees and nationals, mostly donated by the governments of Turkey, China, some foundations, and individuals.
- To mitigate the adverse fall out of Afghan refugees on host communities, predictable contribution from the international community is required to share the burden and responsibility of protecting and hosting Afghan refugees while they are temporarily residing in Pakistan, assisting communities, compensating for damaged infrastructures, land and forests, providing grants to strengthen services, especially education and health facilities which are used by host communities and refugees.
- Emphasize that while adopting a broad diversified Support Platform, responsibility-sharing with new partners should not be a substitute for the contribution of our traditional partners, while the underlining principle is humanitarian assistance through grants.



- The repatriation figures last year, was only 6,020, while numbers during the current period are predicted to be even lower. We need to turn around the strength with a joint effort.
- Pakistan, in close coordination with UNHCR, identified potential projects in education, health, water supply, livelihoods and skills development sectors that benefited both locals and refugees. Only those areas and projects have been selected where the refugees have a significant presence and where projects are sustainable.
- Developing countries will not be able to withstand additional economic shocks. These countries need international support, health liquidity and support for health sectors. Development partners and international financial institutions must meaningfully ease economic pressure on large refugee hosting countries.
- We urge all participants to help VolRep, ease pressure on host communities, and work for creating favourable conditions in the country of origin and support the ongoing peace and reconciliation efforts inside Afghanistan.
- Appeal for urgent assistance for refugees and other vulnerable segments due to COVID-19.
- Hope for predictable and concrete commitments from the core group of the Support Platform to help Afghan refugees and hosting communities bring prosperity in the future.

Iran

- Iran is a major host country. We have our own problems with the post-war situation and sanctions. Despite shortcomings we have tried hard to provide support to Afghan refugees.
- We abide by our commitments within the international community. We have provided support and different services; educational services are one example that we provided to documented and undocumented refugees. Also, in health, vaccination, universal health insurance, treatment of COVID-19 patients, empowerment of Afghan refugees towards VolRep, sustainable reintegration. We provide documents for legally employed residents.
- On education, over 400,000 refugees study in our schools free of charge, and over 17,000 students are in universities this academic year.
- On livelihoods and skills training, in 2018 we had over 35,000 individuals enrolled in these programs and we launched revenue generation workshops for vulnerable refugees, especially for female headed households.
- On health we have established a universal health insurance coverage scheme for all refugees in Iran, with over 100,000 vulnerable refugees, especially those with diseases, having special free of charge taxes for their medication, supported by UNHCR.
- In the 2020, Iran faces very adverse conditions and also unilateral sanctions.
- When we were developing the Support Platform, Iran emphasized the need to look for equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing, so our request within this support mechanism is to fill the gaps and to operationalize international solidarity. This Platform, alongside creating multilateral engagement, should provide concrete outcomes. The international community should actually look into equitable procedures of hosting Afghan refugees.
- Clear request to the international community, Afghanistan, and UNHCR: we need to work in line with concrete objectives such as VolRep from Iran to Afghanistan and also resettlement in third countries. This goal should be accompanied with time bound procedures and regular monitoring of progress made by the Support Platform and addressing exiting deficiencies in this process. In other words, we need to facilitate and expedite voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees.
- Indicators or indexes should be considered by the international community. UNHCR should be assessed on an annual basis.
- To conclude, we extend our thanks to the international community and UNHCR for their support. We hope that this kind of support will be able to continue with this procedure and make a drastic change in the inequitable procedure of burden- and responsibility-sharing.



The World Bank Group

- Fully subscribe to the overarching goals of the SSAR as reflected in the 3 pillars, supporting VolRep, enabling reintegration, and assisting host countries and communities.
- We have all contributed to the successful achievement of the end goal of the Solutions Strategy, that is a world where Afghan refugees can return home, comfortable, with the knowledge that they will be welcomed and have access to basic services and jobs that enable them to lead dignified lives.
- We work to provide opportunities for refugees, to ensure safe returns to Afghanistan and to ensure their reintegration into society in both a sustainable and durable manner.
- In support of VolRep, we are working with the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, of Refugees, and Repatriation and also partnering with UNHCR in Afghanistan.
- We are providing support through a specific project in ensuring that Afghan nationals in Pakistan are aware of, have access to consular services and other information that can help them access economic opportunities and social services on return.
- Also help the Minister of Foreign Affairs to provide increased consular services in Pakistan such as issuing machine-readable passports.
- We strengthen the enabling environment for economic opportunities in the medium-term to help create economic and job opportunities. Our project provides short-term employment, improves the market enabling infrastructure and supports investor-friendly environment.
- In rural areas where there has been a rapid influx of refugees returning and a high number of displaced people, we also have the *Citizens Charter Project* that is improving the delivery of core infrastructures for social services at the community level. The *Citizens Charter Project* is providing cash for work assistance to displaced households to returnees and host communities but also matching grants for private sector to top up what communities raised.
- We attend to top up this assistance through an emergency food and cash support to over 90% of households across Afghanistan whose lives and livelihoods have been impacted or will be impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The COVID-19 relief effort for Afghan communities' households project is in advanced stages of preparation and we hope to have this approved in the next few months.
- To support community integration, we are using inclusive participatory processes to help strengthen social inclusion and cohesion. We are involving communities in the identification, the development and the implementation of infrastructure investments under both the first project mentioned and the *Citizens Charter Projects*.
- Both projects take a special approach that benefits the entire community rather than just focusing only on returnees or internally displaced persons.
- We are also mobilizing poor marginalized households into communities' groups under the women's economic and farm and rural development project.
- Acknowledge the ongoing collaboration and partnership with UNHCR for the support, development, and implementation of our projects, the collection of data in areas where access to WBG is restricted and also in the joint planning and assessment of policy issues.
- Also mentioning IOM for data sharing and analysis to link UNHCR refugee's registration with our own socio-economic database.
- Going forward, we envisage synergies with the priority areas of return and reintegration with activities where there is an overlap the geographic coverage and we look forward to continuing our strong collaboration with UNHCR.
- Committed to supporting Afghans return that is sustainable and allow them to contribute to the social and economic development goal of Afghanistan.



ICVA

- NGO statement delivered on behalf of a wide range of NGO:
<https://www.icvanetwork.org/resources/high-level-meeting-support-platform-solutions-strategy-afghans-refugees-6-july-2020-ngo>

Interventions from the floor

Turkey

- There are many people unfortunately displaced from their countries because of wars and instability, and they are in search for better life opportunities.
- The Afghan refugee issue could not be overlooked by the international community and it has reached such a level that both Pakistan and Iran, despite the difficulties they face in their own countries, are showing a big solidarity with respect to the Afghan refugees.
- To resolve this issue in a better manner, it is not fair to focus the burden on just a few countries. It is the responsibility of all States worldwide so it is very important we consider the invitation extended to include Turkey in the core group of the Support Platform.
- As indicated in the Conference in Geneva on 26 June, our country is showing solidarity and extended all its resources, not only for Afghan refugees but to all the refugees that choose to come to our country.
- We do believe that in addition to their livelihood resources we need to understand why these people are migrating and why they want to migrate.
- We need to support them in terms of their VolRep to their own country.
- For the last four decades, Pakistan and Iran and other countries have hosted their Afghan brothers and we do believe that they should be returning to their countries once stability and security is established within the security measures.
- Thanks for the invitation to be part of the Support Platform. This is now under deliberations within our governmental system.
- In the support strategy mechanism for the Afghan refugees, we would like to be a part of the management mechanism of this platform.

Denmark

- The Afghan displacement situation continues to be one of the largest displacement situations. There is no sign that this would change, therefore we must all try to double our effort in support of better solutions for Afghan refugees and affected communities.
- This is a shared responsibility for the international community, we must support the governments in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran that for so long have carried the burden of managing this complex situation.
- For this reason, Denmark is fully supportive of the establishment of a Support Platform. This could make a real change if managed well.
- We will need to be realistic; this is not about mobilizing further humanitarian funding which is already on the hamstring in the COVID-19 pandemic and other protracted crises.
- In line with the GCR, the focus should be on long-term approaches for Afghan refugees, returnees and affected communities within the framework of national development plans.
- Denmark is positively inclined to join the core group, but we would appreciate clarity on the ToRs, including with respect to roles, responsibilities and the expected location of activities. We believe the operational site of the core group should be in the region and not in Geneva.
- Our engagement reflects our long-term support for solutions for displaced Afghans and host communities. We have invested heavily in this over the past 15 years, in close partnership with the Afghan government, UNHCR, and civil society such as the Danish Refugee Council.



- We are planning 80 million Danish Kroner in support of return and integration, on top of our humanitarian contribution including and expected 50 million Danish Kroner for UNHCR.
- The Support Platform has a strong potential to foster collective thinking and action, involving the government and all other stakeholders. We hope that allows for targeted operational dialogue rather than simply political statements of support.

China

- This is not only timely, but it also carries significance to have this meeting at this moment as we all know COVID-19 is still rampant in many parts of the world and while refugees are among the most vulnerable groups.
- Command the HC for his strong leadership in mobilizing resources for combatting COVID-19 in refugee camps and the recipient countries.
- Express our support to UNHCR's constructive and positive role in resolving the Afghan issue. Now that Afghanistan has entered a critical period for peace and reconciliation, China hopes that our longstanding friendly neighbour will achieve peace and stability.
- Since 2002, China has provided over ¥ 3 billion of assistance and undertaken many social and livelihood projects such as in areas of water, conservation, healthcare, training, etc.
- In recent years, we provided over 1000 professional training and government scholarship annually to help Afghanistan to enhance independent development capacities.
- As turmoil constitutes the major cause of the Afghanistan refugee issue, it is of utmost importance and urgency to achieve peace and stability in Afghanistan and hence, move towards long-term sustainable development.
- China supports the Afghan-led reconciliation process and we support any efforts which are conducive to peace sustainability in Afghanistan.
- China calls on foreign troops to withdraw from Afghanistan in an orderly and responsible manner even though space for terrorists grow and spread.
- Express our continued support for the Afghanistan peace and reconciliation process and also to provide assistance to Afghanistan refugees through various channels.
- We highly appreciate Pakistan and Iran for their contribution in solving the Afghan refugee issue. We hope that the international community, in particular developed countries will fulfil their due responsibilities by increasing humanitarian assistance and alleviating economic and social pressure on host countries.
- Wish this Support Platform to achieve desirable results and to make more contributions to find lasting solution to the issue.

UK

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/uk-statement-to-the-solutions-strategy-for-afghan-refugees-high-level-meeting>

Germany

- 40 years of forced displacement of Afghans require a new sustainable way of collaboration, a stronger commitment by development actors, and all of our concerted political effort.
- Germany itself currently hosts over 260,000 Afghans nationals, many of them with refugee status, which makes Afghans the second largest group of refugees in our country.
- Germany does not only host Afghan refugees but has been a strong supporter for Afghan refugees and the host communities in Pakistan and Iran for decades.
- Through bilateral efforts and multilateral mechanisms, e.g. DAFI scholarship program, we enabled Afghan refugees to access higher education in Pakistan and Iran for over 25 years.



- The Support Platform is vital to reinvigorate the Solution Strategy for Afghan Refugees and to better coordinate efforts for millions of Afghans that had to leave their homes. It will allow for intensified exchange between different actors and promote bundling of all efforts.
- It will also facilitate a common and more concerted approach to broadening and diversifying the base of support, in line with the spirit of the Global Compact of Refugees and as a follow-up to the first Global Refugee Forum, of which Germany was a co-convenor.
- We express our willingness to participate as a core group member and help to make the platform a success.

Japan

- https://www.geneve-mission.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr_en/statements_humanitarian_20200706.html

USA

- We recognize Pakistan for generously hosting Afghan refugees for over 40 years. Since 2006, Pakistan has issued proof of registration cards to registered Afghan refugees providing them with the legal right to live in Pakistan. We call on the government of Pakistan to extend this important protection tool as well as Afghan citizen cards.
- For years the US has prioritized supporting Afghan returnees, refugees, and displaced persons. Since 2001, we have provided nearly 3.5 billion in humanitarian assistance to support displaced Afghans.
- We support the work of UNHCR and NGOs to educate children, provide healthcare, strengthen livelihoods and protect the most vulnerable.
- We all share the hope that conditions will soon permit Afghans to return home voluntarily to rebuild their country.
- Involuntary returns, instability by overwhelming limited resources within Afghanistan, exacerbate vulnerabilities within communities and undermine our efforts to achieve peace.
- The Support Platform presents an opportunity for donors, humanitarian, and development actors to commit to concrete action in support of Afghan refugees.
- United States called on the core group to amplify its commitment to preventing forced returns and coordinating voluntary, safe, dignified, and sustainable returns. Encourage the core group to clearly define how it will support Afghan refugees in this endeavour.
- As the core group defines its goals, we offer these suggestions: 1) Boost humanitarian and development collaboration to ensure the short, medium, and long-term needs of Afghan refugees and returnees and to create an enabling environment for their successful return. 2) Increase cross-border coordination on the part of donors, among humanitarian and development actors and in between host countries and Afghanistan, to better prepare for returnee reintegration. 3) Involve the private sector and sustainable solutions to have additional resources into the economies of supporting Afghan refugees and returnees. 4) Call to expand burden-sharing among more donor partners.
- Urge all countries represented today to continue their strong support for Afghan refugees in the year ahead, even as COVID-19 makes this all the more challenging.
- Ask host countries to continue providing a safe environment to Afghans as they await their return. Urge the Support Platform to pursue these goals not just with words but with action.

South Korea

- COVID-19 is affecting the entire globe, with particularly negative effects on refugees and displaced persons. Take this opportunity to pay a tribute to UNHCR for providing refugees with lifesaving support including medical care.



- Recognize the supporting sacrifices made by Pakistan and Iran by hosting a great number of refugees even in this challenging time.
- The Korean government is playing its own part in supporting the international community's efforts in support of Afghan refugees and host communities.
- During the Islamabad conference, we explained the Korean government plan for launching a new project for refugees in Pakistan. The launch of the project has been postponed due to logistics and technical issues arising from the pandemic situation. Hopefully, the project will be put in place this year. It is similar to our project currently being implemented for refugees residing in Iran. The projects are there to help ease pressure on Iran and Pakistan.
- We are also developing a project with WHO to help Afghanistan fight the coronavirus. The implementation of the project will begin as soon as procedures are finalized.
- Regarding the invitation by the HC to join the core group of States of the Support Platform, my government is positively considering its participation.
- The Support Platform is truly important for solidarity and resilience. We will continue to work together for the humanitarian cause, peace, stability and development in Afghanistan.

Finland

- We are meeting today to take stock of our collective support to the region and to consider how we can best move forward and find solutions together.
- We are working in the spirit of the GCR and pledges and good practices made at the GRF.
- COVID-19 brings an additional layer of complications and crisis globally. Several aspects are particularly concerning such as the risk and high pressure imposed on already fragile social and health care systems, its gender impact, and on the situation of persons in most vulnerable situations such as persons with disabilities.
- It also adds an element of uncertainty to the situation of Afghan refugees.
- We support the initiation, the launch, and the operation of the Support Platform.
- We are considering the invitation to join the core group.
- With this consideration, we reflect upon our deep commitment to the global refugee response and the implementation of the GCR.
- We are a longstanding supporter of Afghanistan and the region and have provided financial support through the UN system and the World Bank including with the contribution of 1 million Euros to support Afghan refugees in the region through UNHCR last year.
- Measures taken to eradicate poverty and increase well-being contributed to people staying in their home country. The humanitarian, development, and peace nexus is very important.
- International law, including human rights obligations and inclusive policy implementations are vital, in particular, we are reflecting on our role this year as we are co-hosting the 2020 Afghan conference taking place in Geneva in November.
- Afghanistan is at an important juncture and the conference presents a valuable opportunity for the Afghan government and the international community to commit to common objectives for the future.
- We need some more time to decide whether to join the core group.
- Afghanistan is important to us all. Effective multilateral, regional, and bilateral cooperation between states in the region is a necessity for those in the most vulnerable situation and in need of safety, security, and stability.
- Conflict is the main driver for forced displacement and migration from Afghanistan. The window opportunity in the peace process is evident now. We hope inclusive representation and intra-Afghan negotiations will start without further delay. Lasting peace will create security and stability for all Afghans and allow for safe, dignified, and orderly returns of



Afghan refugees. A peaceful Afghanistan would be a driver for further development and stability of the region.

- The government and Afghan people need support from the international and regional stakeholders on their path to security and self-reliance. Sustainable and progressive developments can be achieved through only a firm commitment from all actors to the process. Differences are being put aside and we need to be there in solidarity and in the support of responsibility-sharing.

UNHCR (Filippo Grandi)

- Thanks Ambassador and I hope your deliberations to be part of the core group would be positive but also thanks for mentioning your co-hosting role of the November conference.
- Hope that the conference will also be an opportunity to mention and address issues related to forced displacement of Afghan refugees. It will be an important opportunity given the profile of the conference.

Canada

- Thank the UNHCR leadership in convening this meeting and driving forward this new solution strategy as well for its continued engagement with returnees and IDPs within Afghanistan and the support provided to refugees in Pakistan and Iran.
- Commend the ongoing efforts to strengthen protection and develop new approaches for Afghan refugees, asylum seekers, IDPs, and returnees with international protection needs.
- All stakeholders gathered virtually are contributing to these efforts and we thank all partners for your involvement.
- We currently support the Danish Refugee Council to assist undocumented Afghan returnees from Pakistan in the transition from humanitarian crisis to sustainable livelihoods protective rights. This support is helping Afghans in Nangarhar and Kandahar provinces with immediate humanitarian assistance and simultaneous protection in the form of psychological counselling and legal assistance on documentation, registration, and GBV issues faced by women and minors.
- As highlighted in the international community collective dialogue since we gathered at the GRF in December, it is more important to ensure the refugee response is coordinated, comprehensive, and applied regionally.
- We believe that the 3 support platforms launched at the forum including the solution strategies for Afghan refugees are excellent examples of regional approaches to addressing forced displacements and ease pressure on those states.
- They are also important contributions to turning the GCR commitments into reality.
- We believe strongly in adopting coordinated and comprehensive approaches and in integrating humanitarian, development, and peace actors.

EU

- Profound appreciation to Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan for our strong partnership in working towards durable solutions for Afghan refugees and their host communities.
- Praise Pakistan and Iran for their inclusive policies to support refugees and host communities in the fields of education, healthcare, and protection.
- We made contribution to promote lasting solutions to the Afghan displacement situation, as a major political partner and with an envelope of over 9.6 billion Euros of financial assistance. We are a strong partner of Afghanistan, and we stand in solidarity.
- An additional 250 million Euros was delivered to support Afghans on the move in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, focusing on health, education, legal assistance and protection.



- In the COVID-19 context, the EU has now agreed to add 16 million for the most vulnerable Afghan refugees.
- Welcome the Support Platform and its activation should mobilize additional support.
- Express our interest in becoming a member of the core group and we remain committed to continuing our substantial political engagement.
- We are looking forward to constructive and result-oriented dialogue within the platform.
- By working together, recognizing that addressing the refugee situation is a global challenge and sharing-responsibility for the Afghan refugee situation, we can achieve a greater success in our collective effort to promote the resilience and prosperity in the Afghan community.

Netherlands

- In the face of the Afghan conflict and the refugee crisis that accompanied it for 4 decades, we fully support the Platform. It is an important instrument for linking-up the various initiatives taken to support refugees and host communities.
- However, more can be done, and more should be done in days of COVID-19.
- We support the objectives of SSAR through financial contributions made to IOM in Afghanistan, facilitating VolRep and sustainable reintegration of returnees and through our contributions to humanitarian efforts throughout the region.
- We are positively considering joining the core group, awaiting the final political decision.

UNDP

- UNDP stands in solidarity with refugees and communities that host them.
- We affirm our commitment to Support the Platform and wholeheartedly welcome the decision of Afghanistan calling for coordinated and targeted area-based humanitarian, peace, and development investments in priority areas of the return and reintegration.
- This is an opportunity to come together and ensure the whole-of-government and the whole-of-society approaches work for refugees, returnees, and host community.
- At the GRF, UNDP deepened our partnership with UNHCR, particularly in the areas of conflict prevention, rule of law, local governance, and digital livelihoods. We are building on ongoing collaboration in Syria, DRC, Nigeria, in the Rohingya situation, where we promoted an integrated response. Now there is an opportunity to expand our collaboration to the Afghan situation.
- Designated as a technical lead within the UN system for socio-economic recovery from COVID-19, UNDP has a special role to play to ensure refugees are integrated and included.
- We are already working with UNHCR on the COVID-19 socio-economic impact assessment to understand how COVID-19 has impacted displaced population, host communities, and localized cross-border economies.
- Pakistan, UNDP, and UNHCR have a history of collaboration. At regional level, UNDP, UNHCR, IOM, and WHO are working with national services in Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan to strengthen cross-border collaboration, meaning that Afghan refugees, returnees, people on the move continue to receive diagnosis, treatment, and referrals.
- Our ambition is to achieve the SDGs, which are the best investment we can make for a peaceful future. This is an opportunity for humanitarian, development, and peace actors to join forces to not only meet humanitarian needs but also reduce risks, vulnerabilities and build long-term peace and prosperity.

UNICEF

- As part of the GRF, UNICEF proudly subscribed to the GCR and is committed to its implementation specially on all aspects related to children and young people.



- We are confident that the strategic coordination mechanism in engaging the stakeholders will help leverage the international community's political and financial commitments to deliver tangible measures in improving the lives of Afghan refugees.
- As a key humanitarian and development actor, for advancing the rights of all children, including those of refugee children, UNICEF is working with UNHCR and other partners in delivering critical humanitarian assistance to millions of Afghan refugees across Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran. UNICEF is implementing a program in helping refugees and returnees to access health, education, protection, and livelihood services.
- Applaud the efforts of the governments of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran for the exemplarity in the use of policies that have enabled millions of Afghan refugees and nationals to get access to shelter, health, food, education, etc.
- Inclusion is especially important in times of the COVID-19 pandemic and we urge the governments to continue keeping Afghan refugees as a key focus of the response.
- Call upon governments to sincerely adopt the principles of the GCR in the policy towards refugee children and host communities.
- We also urge this forum to assist in granting the blue cards as well as to extend the validity of proof of registration cards for Afghan refugees currently living in Iran and Pakistan.
- UNICEF remains committed to working closely with governments, other stakeholders as well as with local communities in leveraging our connecting support to ensure better support for Afghan children, including refugees and returnees.

UNHCR (Filippo Grandi)

- We heard important messages, especially during the panel, that we need to reflect upon.
- A strong message for responsibility-sharing on the part of the host countries that continue to bear the brunt of giving asylum and protection to millions of Afghans.
- Also, a strong appeal from Afghanistan to support the return and reintegration of those who go back in safety and dignity.
- We also heard important messages on the development side from the World Bank, echoed from UNDP, UNICEF, and others.
- The Support Platform and core group should be strongly focused on bringing together humanitarian and development actors, in order to make planned interventions sustainable.
- Not forget the statement made by ICVA but also echoed by a number of speakers on the importance, while solutions developed in Afghanistan, to maintain a strong protection space in countries of asylum including all measures, like renewal of registration cards, that go with that protection space in a very practical way.
- Thanks to those of you, Germany, Japan, the European Union, that have announced or reconfirmed their intention to be part of the core group but also to those that have said they are considering positively, like Korea, the Netherlands, participating in the core group.
- Make an appeal to all States present here to adopt that positive consideration. We feel very encouraged in continuing this important initiative.
- Some of you made the point that they need to have more details of how the core group will function, we are completely at your disposal to do just that in any format you wish to have.
- In a way, this was the inauguration and presentation of the core group, and of the new portfolio of projects that we have produced together with Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan for your positive consideration. This could be a good initial gesture or action of the core group to focus around the projects that are all geared towards supporting the strategy.
- There is a great need for revitalization, the fact that after 40 years forced displacement still exists, solutions are only for a few. Those host countries have their own challenges including COVID-19. This should really be an incentive for all of us to redouble our efforts.