



**Afghanistan, Pakistan and UNHCR
to explore management and voluntary return of Afghan refugees**

Kabul, 28 June 2013 (UNHCR) – The Governments of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GoA), Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) discussed Pakistan’s proposed draft national policy on Afghan refugees, including the extension of the Proof of Registration cards and the Tripartite Agreement between the three parties. In an “Extraordinary Consultations Meeting” held in Kabul on Friday, all parties agreed to continue their efforts in finding solutions to the world’s most protracted refugee situation.

This meeting was attended by the Afghan Minister for Refugees and Repatriation, Dr. Jamaher Anwary; Pakistan’s Minister of States and Frontier Regions, Lt. Gen. (Retired) Abdul Qadir Baloch; and UNHCR representatives from Afghanistan and Pakistan.

One of the main discussion points of the meeting was the issue of the much anticipated extension of the PoR cards, due to expire at the end of June. Pending a Cabinet decision on extension of Afghan refugees’ PoR cards, which will expire on 30 June 2013, the Pakistani delegation committed to ensure that refugees holding expired PoR cards would remain protected in Pakistan. The Government of Pakistan committed itself to adhere to the international norms while devising new strategies for the management and voluntary return of Afghans in safety and dignity.

“As we are all acutely aware, we are holding this meeting at a very crucial moment. PoR cards are due to expire in just days, and millions of Afghan refugees in Pakistan are experiencing great uncertainty in their immediate future. Thus it is of great importance that we were able, today, to reach an agreement about how best to help them” said Dr. Jamaher Anwary..

Pakistan’s Minister of States and Frontier Regions, Lt. Gen. (Retired) Abdul Qadir Baloch said, “Being a responsible member of the international community, Pakistan will continue to adhere to international norms in addressing the issues of refugees.” The Minister briefed the meeting that the Pakistan is the process of developing a realistic plan of action for the management of Afghan refugees beyond 30 June 2013.

UNHCR and Afghanistan welcomed the proposed extensions of the Tripartite Agreement on Voluntary Repatriation, which governs the return of refugees, and the PoR cards for Afghans, for which the timeframe will be announced after Cabinet approval.

“We believe that by extending the Tripartite Agreement as well as PoR cards for Afghan refugees we’re further strengthening our collaboration, provide the necessary protection to the Afghan refugees and thereby helping their voluntary repatriation to their country” said Bo Schack, UNHCR Representative in Afghanistan.

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Since the fall of the Taliban regime, over 5.7 million Afghan refugees have returned home, 3.8 million of them from Pakistan in the world's largest return operation. 2.6 million refugees still remain in Pakistan and Iran, 1.6 million of them in Pakistan, which is the world's largest refugee hosting country.

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