

Delegation from the Republic of India
Position Paper for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

The issues before the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) are: Protecting Refugees from Human Trafficking and Preventing the Increase of Internally Displaced Persons. The Republic of India believes that these issues are of the utmost importance and looks forward to developing solutions to address them.

I. Protecting Refugees from Human Trafficking

Over 25 million people in the world are victims of human trafficking, including over 20 million in labor trafficking and nearly five million in sex trafficking. Women and children are disproportionately represented within these populations, comprising over 50% of all victims of labor trafficking and 99% of those in sex trafficking. Displaced people are especially vulnerable to human trafficking due to a lack of monitoring infrastructure for refugees in camps and of employment opportunities to support refugees financially as they seek asylum. The UNHCR recently reported that low and middle-income Member States hosted 83% of the world's refugees in 2021, making finding protection and resettlement opportunities more difficult for at-risk individuals in a majority of host Member States. Additionally, The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) also reported that conflicts in the past two years have quadrupled the number of trafficking victims as refugees are coerced into being trafficked through false offers of escape and employment. Because women and girls make up the majority of refugees, they are especially vulnerable to sex trafficking. Given these high statistics, India calls the help of all Member States to find solutions to protect low-income and low-educated refugee families and provide effective solutions for host countries.

India is making strong and significant progress towards achieving *Sustainable Development Goal 8.7* by combating human trafficking among the refugee population both within and without its borders. Along with increasing cross-border cooperation with neighboring Member States like Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Sri Lanka to negotiate victim refoulement and repatriation policies, India has also taken large leaps to both ratify and implement *the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC)* and its three protocols which define human trafficking and outline key methods to impede its progress internationally. Along with ratifying the UNTOC, India developed new relationships with various organizations from civil society, the corporate sector, international organizations, and local Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) to build strong anti-trafficking efforts from the ground level in several major states within India. Regionally, India, along with several neighboring Member States, ratified the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) 2002 *Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution* and the SAARC *Convention on Regional Arrangements for the Promotion of Child Welfare* in South Asia which both develop systems to protect vulnerable women and children from sexual exploitation and prevent these individuals from being highly vulnerable to forced labor. Locally, India planned the implementation of over 300 Anti-Human Trafficking Units (AHTUs) throughout the entire state to provide support for local companies, businesses, and judiciary branches in providing preventative measures against trafficking. India is working domestically to decrease forced labor through passing the *Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act (ITPA)* and working with multilateral organizations to strengthen criminal law provisions, methods and programs for building awareness, and empowerment of vulnerable populations. As trafficking continues to increase internationally, India encourages the cooperation of each Member State in developing solutions to prevent the growth of both sexual exploitation and forced labor both internationally and regionally.

India seeks to combat human trafficking by focusing on the high levels of unemployment among refugees. According to *the UNHCR Global Trends Report 2022* and *United Nations Women Annual Report* more than 50% of all refugees are women and girls and more than 45% of all refugee women are unemployed. Further reports show that about 1 in 5 refugee girls have been trafficked for sex and forced labor. The Republic of India recognizes a strong correlation between unemployed women and girls and vulnerability to trafficking. India highly encourages Member States to decrease vulnerability among refugee populations by ratifying *the International Labor Organization Convention on Domestic Workers* and partnering with *the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Inter-Agency Standing Committee* to implement guidelines for local businesses to provide employment and refugee-specific opportunities for both men and

women. India urges each Member State to follow the example of the *European Business Summit on Refugee Women* who has successfully worked with the OCHA over the past several years to provide mentorship programs to help refugee women across the continent enter the workforce. India hopes these mentorship program guidelines for local businesses will help more refugee women have access to local, safe, high-quality employment to prevent the forced labor, fraud, and coercion used by traffickers internationally.

II. Preventing the Increase of Internally Displaced People

According to the *Global Trends Report 2021* by the UNHCR, there were over 100 million forcibly displaced people throughout the world and just under 53.2 million internally displaced individuals worldwide. The Global Report on Internal Displacement by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) further reports that nearly two-thirds of all new displacement in 2021 occurred due to natural disasters, with disaster-based displacement making up over 10% of all long term IDPs. Aligning with Article 13 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, India is committed more than ever before to both the protection and empowerment of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) forced to leave their homes, families, and livelihood. With IDPs making up more than 1% of the world's population, and with this number projected to increase by at least 10% into 2023 by cause of violence, natural disaster, and conflict, India recognizes both the negative impact on the health, economic progression, and safety of its citizens and the international community as a whole. With IDPs making up more than 60% of the total number of displaced persons, India seeks the help and cooperation of all other Member States to reduce the number of IDPs worldwide and create effective and lasting solutions that both protect the safety of every human being and provide the tools to combat all causes of internal displacement.

The international community has taken significant steps in addressing this issue. The UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) created the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* to act as the international standard for internal displacement. The UNHCR is actively involved in initiatives to help IDPs including leading the Global Protection Cluster, a network of international organizations designed to protect individuals displaced due to conflict and natural disasters. UNHCR has also cooperated with other UN agencies such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and NGOs including the International Foundation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) to design and implement policies harnessing the potential of cross-agency cooperation to benefit IDPs. Regional Organizations have also been actively involved in combating internal displacement; the African Union has ratified the *Kampala Convention*, a landmark treaty that attempts to establish a legal framework for responding to internal displacement. The Republic of India has implemented policies to assist IDPs within its borders, including its *Relief and Rehabilitation of Migrants and Repatriates* program. This program, which is presently scheduled to run through 2026, is designed to help refugees and IDPs to resettle and obtain gainful employment. India's constitution also includes implicit protections for IDPs, especially Article 21 which guarantees right to shelter as established in the 1981 legal case *Mullin v. Union of Delhi*. These protections have been extended to cover IDPs and have formed the basis of India's national response to displacement.

The Republic of India is dedicated to preventing the increase of IDPs and believes that solving this issue will require cooperation between the UN, NGOs, and Member States. India urges Member States to implement Forecast-Based Response programs that work to predict natural disasters and provide aid and assistance to individuals and communities in at-risk regions. Member States should work with the IFRC and other NGOs to provide funding and assistance to these programs; the IFRC has successfully implemented Forecast-Based Response initiatives in several countries including Mongolia and Ethiopia resulting in shorter periods of displacement and faster recovery to pre-disaster norms. In addition to funding provided by Member States and NGOs, UNHCR can provide support for these initiatives through dispatching specialists and consultants to assist in administration and specific technical capacities. India also encourages Member States to cooperate with monitoring organizations including the IDMC to build a better and more comprehensive database on IDPs collected and distributed through UNHCR's Microdata Library. The data provided by the IDMC and other NGOs and Member States has been vital in shaping policy responses for the internal displacement crisis, and greater access to information will allow for more effective targeted responses. India strongly affirms that cooperation between Member States, NGOs, and the UN will allow for better protections for those suffering from internal displacement.