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Voluntary Repatriation Agreement for 1.7 million Afghan Refugees in Pakistan extended through 2012

LAHORE, Pakistan, May 07, – The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the Governments of Pakistan and Afghanistan have formally extended the tripartite agreement governing the voluntary repatriation of registered Afghan refugees in Pakistan until 31 December 2012. Currently, there are 1.7 million registered Afghan refugees in Pakistan.

The signing of the agreement follows the recent decision by the Government of Pakistan to extend the registration status of Afghan refugees through 31 December 2012, which will facilitate the ongoing protection of all registered Afghans.

“The Afghan government was pleased to sign the extension of the tripartite agreement, which demonstrates the continued generosity of the government and people of Pakistan,” said the Acting Minister of Refugees and Repatriation in Afghanistan, H.E. Engineer Abdul Rahim.

The agreement was extended today at a meeting held in Lahore, Pakistan. The meeting was chaired by Pakistan’s Minister for States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON), H.E. Najmuddin Khan, who noted that “Pakistan remains committed to providing continued protection to those Afghans who cannot safely return to Afghanistan as laid down in Pakistan’s management and repatriation strategy for the Afghans in 2010-2012.”

Under the agreement, the three parties once again reaffirmed their commitment to the return of Afghan refugees in conditions of safety and dignity.

At the meeting, the parties also took note of the government of Pakistan’s strategy for the management of the stay of Afghans in Pakistan. The parties agreed to continue dialogue and cooperation on a range of issues including border and visa management and consider the un-registered Afghan issues.

The government of Afghanistan will regularly apprise the parties on the efforts being made for the reintegration of returnees in Afghanistan.

Since the resumption of voluntary repatriation in late March, over 36,000 Afghan refugees have returned to Afghanistan. More than 3.6 million Afghans have returned home from Pakistan since 2002.

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