

Tripartite meeting reviews management of Afghans in Pakistan, return and reintegration efforts in Afghanistan

ISLAMABAD - The UN refugee agency and the Governments of Pakistan and Afghanistan reviewed the management of the registered Afghans in Pakistan, as well as return and reintegration efforts inside Afghanistan during the 18th Tripartite Commission's meeting held in Dubai, last Friday.

The meeting, hosted by UNHCR, was attended by Pakistan's Najamuddin Khan, minister for States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON), and Afghanistan's minister for Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR), Abdul Rahim and UNHCR Representatives from Kabul and Islamabad.

During the meeting UNHCR and Afghanistan recognized the generosity and goodwill of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, for hosting millions of Afghan citizens over three decades and for providing continued protection to them.

Pakistan updated the Tripartite Commission on its strategy for the management of Afghans in Pakistan, and officially confirmed that, subsequent to the anticipated approval of the Prime Minister and the cabinet, it will extend, through 31 December 2012, the Proof of Registration (PoR) cards for registered Afghans. The Tripartite Agreement for the voluntary repatriation will also be extended for another three years.

Pakistan announced that it will start replacing existing PoR cards in 2010 with new cards with enhanced security features.

Law enforcement and immigration authorities in Pakistan will be informed about the validity of the PoR cards. Unregistered members of registered families will be registered, and that Afghan children born in Pakistan to PoR card holders will be issued with birth certificates.

The Parties reaffirmed their commitment to the voluntary and gradual return of registered Afghan citizens living in Pakistan in conditions of safety and dignity, recognising that the prevailing security situation in Afghanistan and the country's absorption capacity may present certain constraints on return.

The Parties agreed to work together to mobilise international support to promote sustainable return to Afghanistan, encouraging increased investment in areas of return and programmes which facilitate re-integration, in line with the Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS).

***For more information, please contact:
+92-301-856-7744***

.../...

Afghanistan committed to continue implementing re-integration programmes, and pledged to make efforts to improve their effectiveness.

It was also agreed to mobilise additional support for communities which have hosted registered Afghans in Pakistan to address environmental degradation and rehabilitate infrastructure and social services through the ongoing Refugee Affected and Hosting Areas (RAHA) initiative. The meeting commended progress on RAHA and the numerous projects underway.

During the meeting Pakistan and Afghanistan pledged to bilaterally address the issues of undocumented population movements and the unregistered Afghan population in Pakistan introducing a flexible visa regime. The support of UNHCR and other competent international entities will also be sought.

Some 3.5 million Afghans have returned home under the tripartite agreement between Pakistan Afghanistan and UNHCR since 2002. Pakistan is still home to some 1.7 million registered Afghans.

Ends