Delegation from Afghanistan

Represented by Lamar University

**Position Paper for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees**

The topics before the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees are: Implementing Emergency Responses for Seafaring Refugees; Ensuring Equal Rights for Refugees from Complex Crises; and Sustainable Environmental Management Practices in Refugee Affected Areas. Afghanistan and its people have fallen victim to ongoing civil and religious unrest resulting in devastating destruction of their homeland and ongoing refugee crises. The delegation feels particularly strong about these issues, as we support non-refoulement and recognize the human rights of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs).

I. Implementing Emergency Responses for Seafaring Refugees

Afghanistan, itself vulnerable due to war and refugee crises, advises the implementation of open borders in times of severe crises in regards to non-refoulement, especially at a time when four separate refugee crises in Syria, Iraq, Central African Republic and South Sudan have displaced millions of people torn by war and unrest. The delegation from Afghanistan believes that no person or peoples seeking freedom from persecution should ever feel enough desperation to take to the seas on flimsy vessels and inflatable dinghies; however, refugees in scores resort to such drastic measures in order to reach potential safety. International vessels have the legal and social obligation to help those lost at sea according to the 1994 Law of the Sea decided at the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Afghanistan reminds the international community that it also has the obligation to conduct rescue missions and deliver seafaring refugees to safety as well as provide them with basic human services and rights, such as food, water, medicine, and humane and swift transportation to their next destination, be that to asylum or back to their home country. Currently, there are over 2.5 million refugees originating from Afghanistan in search for a safer home. As a land-locked country situated in the realm of on-going violence, it is imperative that our outgoing refugees have safe and proper channels to escape their dangerous areas. The delegation from Afghanistan agrees with the UNHCR that member-states multilaterally implementing open and legal channels for migrants and refugees, such as humanitarian visas, enhanced resettlement, family reunification, and so forth, will cap the need for “irregular” journeys to safety, including seafaring ventures and human smuggling which strip refugees of their humanity and sometimes, of their lives. The delegation from Afghanistan calls the international community forth to accept more refugees into their borders, although Afghanistan does not have the means or security itself at this moment. More specifically, we stand with the UNHCR in hoping to see a consensus reached between the European Council of Ministers in Brussels in September to adopt a proposal involving the relocation of over 100,000 refugees and greater emergency reception and response by Greece, Hungary, and Italy. Moreover, Afghanistan holds the 40,000 person proposal agreed upon is a start, and applauds those states ready to implement even greater efforts closer to the original proposal. Afghanistan is also in support of 3RP, or the Regional Refugee & Resilience Plan (2015-2016) as a partial solution to efficiently bolster the responsibility of addressing and sharing the needs of Syrian refugees who have been the majority of seafaring refugees. The delegation hopes that member states will recognize such efforts and allocate funds to organizations like these, acknowledging that safer and open borders and implementations to assist refugees region-wide will (1) dissuade refugees from using unsafe channels to cross into freedom, (2) dissuade those attempting to assist such refugees for monetary gain, and (3) save lives.

II. Ensuring Equal Rights for Refugees from Complex Crises

Afghanistan acknowledges and supports the work of the World Health Organization (WHO), which defines a complex crisis as “a humanitarian crisis in a country, region or society where there is total or considerable breakdown of authority resulting from internal or external conflict and which requires an international response that goes beyond the mandate or capacity of any single and/or ongoing UN country programme.” These complex crises have disproportionately affected Afghanistan given its proximity to and involvement
in situations causing complex crises, such as the social, political, and religious unrest and breakdown of states, human rights violations, and domestic armed conflict. Thus, the delegation from Afghanistan supports the 2007 UNHCR Ten Point Plan of Action, which takes a comprehensive approach to mixed migration in Eastern Europe and aims to prevent refugees from facing refoulement and unstable or irregular forward movement on their journeys. The 10 Point Plan is a transnational effort to treat mixed migratory peoples with fairness under international doctrine and distribute responsibilities and aid to specialized areas by following ten steps for each situation, allowing equal yet personalized treatment of refugees. Nearly half a million people seeking refuge from war, extreme poverty, unemployment, and persecution have reached Europe this year, pointing at a need for direct and emergent effort in the area. The delegation also worries that international refugees from states like Syria, Central African Republic, South Sudan, and Iraq may face discrimination and/or further persecution if they choose to flee to Europe, a region which has historically dealt mainly with other European refugees leaving conflict in Eastern Europe. As an international community we must counter xenophobic narratives and make further persecution on religious or cultural grounds unacceptable so as to ensure equality under international law. The status quo mirrors the aftermath of World War II, whose resultant refugee crisis our modern one has now surpassed. World War II has taught us that substantive action must be taken. The delegation from Afghanistan therefore commends all member-states who have welcomed refugees, such as Germany, and commends the United States on its dedication to accept more refugees in 2016 and 2017. However, we posit firmly that the international eye must too focus on the 3.7 million Afghans of concern in South Asia and the Middle East, 800,000 of whom are internally displaced persons (IDPs) and almost 2.6 million of whom are refugees. The UNHCR and Afghanistan have, for starters, drafted a national refugee and asylum law which awaits legislative inclusion. Moreover, the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees, or SSAR, sets a structure for and supports sustainable reintegration for returning refugees, and various other programmes and organizations, such as the Refugee Affected and Hosting Areas programme (RAHA) between Pakistan and Afghanistan as well as efforts in the Islamic Republic of Iran including but not limited to issuing complementary health insurance services and temporary work permits, all aid Afghans greatly, but additional action by the international community is still greatly needed.

III. Sustainable Environmental Management Practices in Refugee Affected Areas

Afghanistan recognizes the disproportionate impact of refugee camps in specifically low-income countries. The lack of technology and expenditures directly contributes to the waste, inefficient energy consumption, and exhaustion of resources, thus leaving affected areas often barren, eroded, or deforested, and causing environmental concerns for the local area and the international community. Poor management practice for waste and waste treatment can affect both the biodiversity of local ecosystems and access to a clean drinking supply. Refugees may also bring forth invasive species. That, coupled with land clearing and hunting, proves ruinous to affected areas and may deplete biodiversity and general wildlife. While every situation is different, Afghanistan supports the practice of member states conscientiously planning or brainstorming approaches and natural resources before a refugee crisis occurs so that in such an event, they may be more prepared for and effective in resource distribution. Funding must too be planned. Some methods to cut back on such negative impacts include resource-for-work initiatives, where firewood and other resources are given in exchange for environmental work, and marking trees which can or cannot be felled for firewood or construction materials, as was proven effective in Kagera, Tanzania. Refugee hosting areas can also take steps to reduce longer term effects by practicing responsible farming to ensure the protection of viable soil. Implementing programmes to coordinate and agree upon environmental efforts between host states and refugees, such as the Refugee-affected Areas Rehabilitation Programme, or RARP, in Nepal which sought to provide working opportunities, ameliorate infrastructure and appease environmental concerns. Such programmes and agreements can also provide a forum for refugees and hosts to discuss economic concerns and come to a consensus over what plan of action is fair and stable for the global community and all member-states specifically involved.