

**Speech of Mr. Mushtaq Ahmed Alizai,
the Commissioner for Afghan Refugees, North-West Frontier Province**

Date of delivery: 21.06.2002

Excellencies, head of the UNHCR, Peshawar, ladies and gentlemen.

Aslam u Alaikum.

On this concluding day, of the intense focus, on “Refugee Women” during the “UN’s year of the Refugee”, I may be allowed to remark that these events, did very aptly highlighted, that how little attention is granted to the female. Not only as a refugee, whence she is in double danger, but otherwise in our ordinary life too, we find similar pathos, quite common.

I must also appreciate the synergy evolving, among all partners in the process, specially UNHCR sub-office Peshawar and my commissionerate, specially now and this moment in time, that as a refocus and reorientation, has been inculcated in these two organisations towards the beginning of the end, of a quarter century long, saga of human misery and plight. Displaced in time and motion, only one undergoing, such an endeavour, could fathom the life long, imprints such state of being, a refugee implants and imprints.

It nevertheless should not be forgotten the hospitality extended to the Afghan Refugees has no match in history.

All Afghan refugees were allowed to feel at home and as it is quite visible that each and every local individual went beyond his and her means to assist the Afghan refugees in flux. The local natives of this province specially suffered economically and lost a lot in the labour market, in retail trade and so many other income generating ventures but have accepted the Afghan refugees as their own kith and kin by showing patience, forgiveness and even under sheer sympathy.

The contribution made by each individual of this province of this province to accommodate the Afghan refugees, are worth writing in gold, if ever history chose so. These people exemplified the concept of hospitality, once more, as is their tradition since aeons.

Even though as it is correct to say that UNHCR, as regard to the Afghan refugee caseload, was not a short time engaged in all four sectors of refugee related activity but now our focus is sharply on voluntary repatriation and I and my government is pleased with the results so far.

In any multi-agency operation, dissemination of accurate, timely and relevant information, is a vital integral, for the task in our hands to succeed. Improved and clear communication, amongst the staff in the field ensures smoother, professional and efficient handling of the caseload.

Prompt and rapid responses, unforeseen should be ingrained, in our all-operational planning, as built in contingency fall back. A good management never likes surprises.

The Afghan refugees Commissionerate operates as the focal point for these displaced human mass, its staff, from camp based to headquarter stationed, have literally given away their life long services to these Afghan Refugees. I avail this occasion to pay my sincere respects to them for a job well done and wish them well.

All national and international NGOs working as UNHCR's Implementing Partners must in their own interest develop a close knit co-ordination with, Social Welfare Cell, in the Commissionerate so as have effective bilaterally beneficial activity planning, resource and information sharing and also, to avoid duplication of efforts, energy, time and meet the assigned responsibilities effectively on time.

As it has become transparent now, that as a multi-racial, multi-ethnic and multi geographical team, we all can resolve the minor issues, which crop up in any co-operation at the appropriate level and stand poised sure foetidly, to handle the leftover case load of the Afghan Refugees, to avail the choice of voluntary repatriation from this province, I expect the best from each of us.

I am especially happy to note the commitment, shown by the prominent Afghan ladies, who have under dire conditions kept the candle of hope, kindled.

I also, with those, who are children today but will grow up to be the men, leading the Afghanistan, tomorrow, my sincere prayers and unshakeable confidence, strongly reposed is in them.

I also expect that the young Afghan sisters and mothers, to fully avail off, the new opportunities, opening up for them, in the areas from education to non traditional employment. But also remember that your traditions and customs will demand strong will to change and such a change should always be positive. In any other case, the prevalent social forces reject, out right such cosmetic changes.

In the end, I would again like to thank the head of the UNHCR office at Peshawar, all our international and national partners, who actually made, these days, so remarkably yielding.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you.