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## UNHCR Statement

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UNHCR is concerned about the *widespread* and, in some countries, *increasing* use of immigration detention for asylum-seekers, refugees, stateless persons and migrants. Seeking asylum is not an unlawful act; on the contrary, it entails the right to access open and humane reception arrangements. In spite of this, States increasingly resort to detention as means of controlling entry and as a method of deterring irregular migration.

*Detention of children* is of particular concern to UNHCR. Every year hundreds of thousands of children are detained for immigration purposes worldwide, alone or together with their families. Immigration detention has a devastating effect on the physical, emotional and psychological development of these children, even if they are not separated from their families. Children should, in principle, not be detained at all.

### **Global Detention Strategy 2014-2018**

In 2014, UNHCR will launch a five-year *Global Detention Strategy* that aims to work with governments and other partners to address some of the main challenges and concerns around governmental detention policies and practices.

This Strategy has three main goals:

- i. to end the detention of children;
- ii. to ensure that national legislation provides for alternatives to detention and that alternatives are implemented in practice;
- iii. to improve the conditions of detention where detention is necessary and unavoidable by, *inter alia*, securing access to places of immigration detention for UNHCR and/or its partners and carrying out regular monitoring.

The initial roll-out of this strategy will focus in the coming *two years* in over *10 countries*, selected on the basis of a range of criteria, including regional and thematic diversity, size and significance of the problem, likelihood of making an impact (albeit without prejudicing long-term impacts), and staffing and resources. In the subsequent years, it is intended that additional countries will be added.

The implementation of the Strategy will be done at national/country and/or regional level, as appropriate, through the development of specific *national strategies/plans of action*.

These national strategies/plans of action will include a set of specific/prioritised actions and activities that need to be developed, *in coordination with all relevant actors and stakeholders* (including government counterparts), in order to achieve the overall goals of the Strategy.

### **UNHCR's Recent Contributions and Next Steps**

In October 2012, UNHCR launched the *Guidelines on the Applicable Criteria and Standards relating to the Detention of Asylum-seekers and Alternatives to Detention*. They set out ten interrelated guidelines that touch on different facets of the right to liberty and the prohibition against arbitrary detention for asylum-seekers.

In June 2013, UNHCR and the International Detention Coalition (IDC) signed a *Memorandum of Understanding* to join efforts to this end. As part of this partnership UNHCR has been participating in a series of *Regional Workshops* on prevention of detention and protection of asylum-seekers in different locations around the world (during 2013: Jakarta, 29-20 August; Guatemala, 11-13 September; Johannesburg 23-25 September; Bangkok, 1-3 November; and Jordan, 19-20 November).

The 2014 launch of the *Global Detention Strategy* is part of UNHCR's efforts, in the past few years, to actively **develop tools and to strengthen partnerships** to address the situation of asylum-seekers, refugees and other persons of concern in detention.

Regarding the active developing of partnerships in the field of detention and alternatives to detention, targeted initiatives will focus, under the umbrella of the *Global Detention Strategy*, on joint advocacy and campaigning to improve detention conditions, enhance monitoring of detention practices and places of detention, and increase the provision of technical cooperation and capacity-building, including training, research and information sharing on alternatives to detention.

UNHCR will also soon finalize an *Immigration Detention Monitoring Manual* produced jointly with the Association for the Prevention of Torture (APT) and the International Detention Coalition (IDC). This Manual aims to strengthen the monitoring capacity of not only UNHCR protection staff, for whom detention monitoring is a regular and important protection activity, but also of other actors and bodies with national and/or international mandates to visit places of immigration detention.

Thank you.