



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT BY NORWAY

As delivered by Counsellor Lars Løberg to the 2012 Human Dimension implementation meeting, Warsaw 24 September 2012 – Working Session 3

Thank you, Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to report to the HDIM about the Swiss-Norwegian co-operation on environmentally induced cross-border displacement called the Nansen Initiative, which will be formally launched in Geneva on October 2nd.

Forced displacement is a major humanitarian problem, causing people to leave their homes for longer and shorter periods, some permanently. The response to this humanitarian problem is based in part on the nature of its causes. The prime distinction here is that between displacement caused by conflict, human right's violations and persecution as opposed to displacement caused by environmental factors, some which may be related to climate change, others not. The response is based in part on whether people forced to flee stay within their own country, usually referred to as internally displaced persons or IDPs or whether they cross an internationally recognized border.

Response means several things, but if we concentrate on the legal, normative dimension, it is important to underline that there is no legal gap with regard to internal displacement. We know that the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement agreed on in 1998, as well as relevant regional instruments, such as the Kampala Convention, are fully applicable. That is not necessarily the case with cross-border displacement. Those who are forced to flee from conflict, human right's violations or persecution are protected by human rights law and international refugee law.

The normative protection gap remains however when people are forced to flee from natural disasters or risk being returned to areas which are inhabitable. This is a category we normally refer to as environmentally cross border displaced persons.

Last year UNHCR, in the context of the 60th anniversary of the Refugee Convention, the 50th anniversary of the Statelessness convention and the 150th anniversary of the birth of Fridtjof Nansen, the first High Commissioner for Refugees under the League of Nations, invited states to

pledge support for measures which would contribute to increasing the protection of people forced to flee.

At last year's UNHCR's Ministerial Meeting, Switzerland and Norway made a pledge to cooperate with interested states, UNHCR and other relevant actors with the aim of obtaining a better understanding of such cross-border movements at relevant regional and sub-regional levels, hereunder identifying best practices and developing consensus on how best to assist and protect affected people. We realize that this is a process that will take several years.

Instrumental in this process has been The Nansen Conference on Climate Change and Displacement which last year adopted the 10 principles to guide future responses, now to be known as the Nansen Principles. Our aim is to collect support for these principles and, to work specifically with regard to promoting the 9th principle which addresses the legal gap.

The Nansen Initiative is meant to be a state-led and a state-hosted process including representation from the global South and North. The idea, of course, is to collect national support from as many participating states as possible, making this a man-made tide flow, but this time in a positive way.

To launch the topic and present the initiative, Switzerland and Norway had organized on 5 September 2012 a workshop in Vienna on "Natural disasters and forced displacement." The official launch of the initiative will take place on 2 October 2012 in Geneva.

The Nansen Initiative fits well into the OSCE family, where refugees and displaced persons always have been a big concern. Thus, I can promise you that you will hear more about the Nansen Initiative in the months ahead of us.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for your attention.