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**Statement by UNHCR at the Human Dimension Session of the 2010 Review
Conference, Warsaw, Poland**

(Working Session 8, Combating Intolerance and discrimination, 6.10.2010)

Mr. President,

Thank you for giving UNHCR the opportunity to address the OSCE today during its working session entitled “Combating Intolerance and Discrimination.”

Human rights are applicable to all, everywhere. Refugees are not only entitled to the rights contained in the 1951 Refugee Convention – as human beings, they should be able to enjoy all fundamental rights and freedoms. Yet, refugees and stateless persons are often perceived to have fewer rights than nationals. Racism, discrimination and related forms of intolerance continue to be amongst the primary root causes of persecution leading to forced displacement as well as to statelessness.

In recent years, racism, xenophobia and discrimination targeted towards asylum-seekers and refugees seems to have increased. Expressions of racism and xenophobia have affected persons of concern to UNHCR in numerous ways:

- as an obstacle for asylum-seekers to gain admission to safety, to asylum procedures, and to obtain protection against *refoulement*
- as an obstacle for refugees and internally displaced persons in finding quality protection
- as an obstacle for refugees in finding durable solutions in the form of sustainable return and reintegration in places of origin, successful local integration in countries of asylum, or resettlement in third countries.
- as an obstacle for certain groups of persons to acquire and /or retain a nationality

Discrimination, intolerance and xenophobia can occur at any stage in the displacement cycle. Access to safety and quality asylum for persons in need of international protection is particularly affected. The stigmatization of asylum-seekers and refugees is often further fueled by restrictive laws, policies and practices.

Earlier this year, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees has cited growing intolerance and xenophobia among the enormous challenges that lie ahead. The Director of UNHCR’s Division of International Protection has identified racist and xenophobic attitudes as the single most important protection challenge today. In his report presented last month to the Human Rights Council, the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination,

xenophobia and related intolerance stated that the rhetoric of extremist political parties may incite racist or xenophobic crimes, and expressed concern that migrants, refugees, asylum-seekers and members of minorities are particularly at risk.

As UNHCR seeks to address public attitudes towards persons of concern in a more strategic manner, it is promoting concerted efforts to analyze these issues and identify solutions through a constructive dialogue with States and with the support of the OSCE/ODIHR.

In December 2009, UNHCR issued a note entitled "Combating Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and related Intolerance through a strategic approach", providing guidance to its field operations and partners to prevent and reduce discrimination affecting person of concern to UNHCR. This Note not only serves as a guide for UNHCR offices around the world, but can also be a useful reference in strategic discussions among all relevant stakeholders - authorities, persons of concern, local community groups and civil society actors, including municipal actors in large urban contexts to form and enhance partnerships.

Non-discrimination is a core human rights principle and it is the duty of all States to acknowledge and give effect to it. Through its strategic partnership with OSCE, UNHCR intends to strengthen its fight against discrimination, racism and other forms of intolerance and enhancing the protection of victims of racist and xenophobic crimes.

We are looking forward to the continuation of our fruitful cooperation.
Thank you.