

## UNHCR Intervention at Bali Process Government and Business Forum

Friday, 25 August

Excellencies, Honorable Ministers, Ladies & Gentlemen,

Let me first of all express our gratitude to the Co-Chairs and conveners of this Forum for giving UNHCR an opportunity to participate in this innovative regional multi-stakeholder platform which endeavours to bring about **a new generation of partnerships with the business community** in our collective efforts to address and prevent some of the most daunting humanitarian challenges we are facing today.

The 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda laid out a framework for sustainable growth and development underpinned by **inclusiveness** – inclusiveness in terms of impact, recognition of the connectivity of today's humanitarian and development challenges, but importantly also in forging new and stronger partnerships with a variety of non-traditional actors, including the business community and private sector. It is the latter who can play a **critical role in bringing innovation in our interventions, solutions and importantly in prevention.**

A recent UN calculation shows that the returns on investments that can be generated by the full implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) could amount to **\$30 billion per year**. This goes to show that partnerships with the business sector are attractive for both sides and opens up opportunities for **robust alignment of the core business objectives of the private sector with the strategic humanitarian and development goals of the international community.**

There is no better place in the world to harness the dividends of this collaboration than Asia – **the fastest growing region in terms of economic growth and population**, but at the same time also home to the largest number of the world's poor. It includes low income countries with massive labour surpluses some of which are facing or recovering from conflict, middle-

income/newly industrializing countries with increasing dependency on foreign workers, as well as two of the world's three largest economies.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Asia is also a **“continent on the move”** – a vast landmass characterized by large-scale population movements that are both a driver of unprecedented economic expansion and a challenge to the concepts of state sovereignty and national security. Upholding humanitarian principles and human rights values and preserving asylum in such a **complex environment** is a daunting task requiring thinking **“outside the box”** and **beyond narrow, strictly national level parameters**.

The large-scale movements of refugees and migrants are often composed of **highly-mobile and very young populations with different skill-sets traversing the region in search of solutions**, either by heading to the east/south east and to middle income or industrialized countries (Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Australia) or far to the west, through Central Asia to Europe.

In our work with the Governments present here, UNHCR attempts to unlock **win-win scenarios that benefit both refugees and the communities hosting them**. Business is often the missing link. Refugees bring with them a wealth of **untapped human capital**; they can and often do make significant contributions to the economies of their host communities and, eventually, their home countries, as long as they are given the opportunity.

**By building refugees' resilience and harnessing their skills**, the private sector can make the business case for how refugees can benefit both bottom lines and local economies, while also reducing the need for imported labour. Refugees in turn accumulate skills and experience that set them up for success when the time is right for their return home. And as others have noted, business is also uniquely positioned to help weed out the subversive elements that prey on the vulnerability of refugees and others and exploit their labour for criminal purposes, suppressing talent rather than nurturing it.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Robust engagement of private sector can open brand new horizons for **solutions that are innovative, resilience-based and forward-looking**. This Forum gives us all a unique opportunity to collectively develop pathways for refugees in this region that are **safe, humane, but also profitable**, coupling the right to work with opportunities to fulfil their, and their host communities', immense potential.

We remain strongly committed to working with you all and hope that this Forum will serve as an inspiration for creation of similar regional networks around the world.