

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

UNHCR AT 60:

A DISCUSSION WITH ANTONIO GUTERRES,
THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

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Introduction and Moderator:

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. PICCONE: Good morning and thanks for your patience. I'm Ted Piccone. I'm a Senior Fellow and Deputy Director of the Foreign Policy Program here at Brookings. It is a real honor for us to be able to welcome Antonio Guterres, the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, here to the Brookings Institution.

I don't think he needs much of an introduction, but let me just say a couple of brief words. I first had the opportunity to meet him in the context of another activity that he's been involved in particularly before he took on this job which was the Club of Madrid, which is a group of former presidents and prime ministers and Antonio is one of the leading voices in that esteemed group who had a vision and a mission and a mandate and I think he's brought to everything he's done in politics and now at the U.N. in one of the most important jobs on the frontlines of helping people who are in really the most dire circumstances cope and resettle their lives.

You all know his bio and his background as a former Prime Minister of Portugal for many years and a leading figure in Portugal's own transition to democracy. You're also familiar with the agency he heads and we're going to hear more about it today as UNHCR is celebrating its sixtieth anniversary at a time of tremendous challenge and growing demands being placed on this agency everywhere from Pakistan, Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, Cote d'Ivoire, Libya, the list goes on and on and on, Colombia in this hemisphere, and yet the resources are falling way short with huge gaps in meeting the needs. So we're going to hear about what's going on with UNHCR in this particular moment of demand and crisis and then we'll have a chance to engage in a lively conversation back and forth and I think we'll have him speak right here from the chair.

MR. GUTERRES: I think it's better to have a more friendly conversation

without the podium. I always feel a little bit intimidated with podiums.

I'd like to say that I'm very happy to be here with you. I've been following your Project on Internal Displacement which I think is to a large extent in the very center of your concerns. And I think that the Brookings Institution has given a fantastic contribution to the capacity of the international community to think about how to face challenges for which to be honest we were not well-prepared and I believe we are still not yet well-prepared.

The main concern we have today in the run-up for the commemorations of our sixtieth anniversary of the 1951 Convention, the main concern is to try to see if the international community will be willing to consider the need to address the protection gaps in relation to the new forms of forced displacement that we have in today's world.

The 1951 Convention is a remarkable instrument. I doubt that if it would be drafted today it would be as strong as it is. The rights that are emphasized and the way the international community has given UNHCR a strong mandate in relation to monitor the way those rights are respected by countries, by states, again I don't think these would be possible to replicate today. But the 1951 Convention addresses a limited number of the people on the move with protection needs in today's world. There have been a lot of developments in the interpretation of what persecution means. Today we recognize lots of nonstate agents of persecution, and courts have given a very important contribution, a very enlarged interpretation for instance of the concept of a particular social group as a source of persecution, and we see now that from family violence to the questions of LGBTI and to other cultural and religious aspects society linked more than even state linked. The Convention is being interpreted more and more as allowing for persecution to be invoked in a broader number of aspects, but even going as far as we

can in the interpretation of the Convention we need to recognize that the Convention will never cover most of the people who today are in need of protection on the move in the world.

First of all, by definition the Convention doesn't cover the people displaced within the borders of any country, and if we have 10.5 million refugees not counting the Palestinian refugees under UNHCR's mandate, we more than 27, 27.4 or 5 internally displaced people because of conflict and the number of internally displaced because of natural disasters changes very quickly but some estimates go up to 50 million and they are obviously not covered by the 1951 Convention. All of these people are under the authority of their own state and we know that those states are in many circumstances part of the problem and not part of the solution sometimes because they are failed states or very weak states, they have not the capacity to protect their own people, sometimes because they are strong states and this is the worst situation and they are not willing to protect their own people or are they the oppressors of their own people. We recently had situations as complex as Sri Lanka or as enduring Darfur in which this is very clear. And even in natural disasters when one sees what happened in Myanmar, it is not always clear that protection is properly granted to people by the states in charge. But then there are more and more people also on the move crossing borders who have protection needs that are not addressed by the international community and for whom it is not possible to invoke the 1951 Convention.

If one looks at today's global trends or mega trends, population growth, it's an issue that has not been very much on the global agenda. There is I think a certain conspiracy to put the population growth question out of the global debate, but I think it is a main driver that we cannot forget. We are today almost 7 billion worldwide. The

forecast for 2050 you know is 9 billion. But population growth is linked to another phenomenon that I think is crucial to analyze what's happening in today's world which is urbanization. We having more and more urban refugees, less and less refugees in camps, but more than half of the world's population today lives in cities and again the forecast for 2050 is 70 percent. This is a total change in relation to traditional patterns and the protection concerns in an urban environment are very different from the protection concerns in traditional encampment situations or in rural environments.

Then climate change. I must say that in my opinion climate change is the biggest frustration for anyone who looks at the international community today, the inability to have a common front to address this problem, and it is clear that climate change has huge direct impacts and it's an enhancer of the impacts of many other trends in today's world. For instance, water scarcity, 1.5 billion people lack safe water. Food insecurity, 1 billion are hungry today and there is a clear linkage. We see lots of summits, summits on climate change, summits in food security but these things are never brought together. Indeed, what I feel is that all these mega trends are getting more and more interconnected and the world is becoming smaller and smaller. There are today physical limits to global growth. And they not only are more and more interconnected but they are also connected with concerns of security and of peace. They trigger conflict in many circumstances or they help trigger conflict. And at the same time all these factors combined are today a main cause of displacement.

It is very difficult to distinguish when displacement is voluntary and when displacement is forced in these situations. We know for instance if there is a tornado, there is a natural disaster that is clear and that has an immediate impact. But the slow onset of certain aspects triggered by climate change, for instance, drought where drought

makes slowly areas being totally not inhabitable. Of course more and more people will be living, at a certain moment there will be nobody there and is this economic migration, is this forced displacement? It is not clear.

What is real is that in today's world we are having more and more situations in which we have mixed flows of populations on the move. Some might be considered refugee according to the 1951 Convention. Others are clearly traditional economic migrants. But many are in these blurred circumstances in which we do not know exactly why they are moving and we can say that there are patterns of forced displacement that are not fully understood in today's world. And because of that, the capacity of the international community to grant protection to people in need of protections in these new trends of forced displacement is very limited. There are no legal instruments beyond those human rights general instruments that exist and we know that the human rights agenda in general has been losing ground with relation to the national sovereignty agenda in the recent past, and at the same time the coalitions, the forms of cooperation between states and international organizations in order to address these protection gaps are very limited. So that one of the central aspects of the debate we would like to generate going into the ministerial conference that will culminate our commemorations of the sixtieth anniversary is to try to make the international community accept the need to seriously discuss what kind of new instruments, new forms of cooperation, new alliances are necessary, what kind of new protection compact can be defined in order to address the protection gaps that are due to the new trends of forced displacement in today's world knowing that many of these forms of forced displacement are internal but also that many of them involving the crossing of borders and there are many, many issues on the table. For instance, one of the issues that is very centrally on

the table of all discussions inside the UNHCR and with our partners is does it make sense to try to have a new legal instrument on temporary protection? Is it something that we should be looking at with the European Union as an instrument on temporary protection? Some Nordic countries for instance grant temporary protection to victims of natural disasters, but the situation is very different from country to country. Is there a chance of an instrument like that to be considered? Probably not. If so, is it a useful instrument? Some people will argue isn't that going to undermine refugee protection according to the 1951 Convention? So there are lots of very interesting discussions that I believe will be very important to have and the Brookings Institution is very much invited to put your intellectual capacity producing ideas and arguments in favor and against the possible alternatives we have in addressing these protection gaps in today's world.

Looking more directly in relation to our challenges now in accordance to our mandate but also linked to the problems of internal displacement due to conflict, I usually consider that the center of all concerns independent of many other crises around the world that have a local or a regional impact, the center of all concerns is with what a "Time" magazine number of I think in the 1980s had in on its front page, what was called the an arc of crisis and the arc of crisis is still the same. It starts in Pakistan, it goes into Afghanistan, Iraq and its neighbors, the Middle East, Palestine and Lebanon, and then it comes to the Sudan, Chad and to the Horn of Africa including Yemen and the other side of the Horn of Africa, Somalia of course and its neighbors. Two-thirds of the world's refugees are generated in this arc of crisis and at the same time this arc of crisis is linking a number of situations that are more and more interconnected. All of them are linked to concerns of global security. We just recently had this operation that was very much in the media that took place exactly at one of the points of the arc of crisis. And to a certain

extent probably the most complex relationship in today's world, the relationship between the so-called Western world and the Muslim world, is very much in the center of this arc of crisis. As I said, two-thirds of the world's refugees are generated in this arc of crisis and even if we have many other operations that are dramatic from a humanitarian point of view, the Democratic Republic of Congo for instance, and we could go on and on in the Western Hemisphere, Colombia, recently Sri Lanka was of course one of the most acute situations, but each one of those other ones are isolated to a certain extent. They are problems in themselves. Although they have a regional dimension, but they are in the global concerns of the international community. Nobody is expecting that a Congolese terrorist will come out of the DRC to put a bomb in Oslo, but people might think that someone originating from any of the areas of the arc of crisis might one day go to Oslo to put a bomb or be already in Oslo and do something of this sort. So there is a certain neglect of the international community in relation to the other crises that tend to be forgotten even if sometimes they have a dramatic humanitarian impact and people suffer enormously. Eastern Congo is a good example of that. But it is fair to say that central to our efforts is today concentrated in this arc of crisis.

I believe that this arc of crisis that represents a lot of our concerns offers today also a very important opportunity and I would like to end with these comments. When one sees what recently happened in Tunisia and Egypt, and I know the two situations are not the same. The Jasmine Revolution is probably more authentic as a revolution than the Lotus Revolution in many aspects. The role of the army for instance is different in those countries. But the truth is that for many who thought that in the Arab world there was no alternative but either to support a dictatorship or to support an Islamic fundamentalist movement, it was a problem that there was another alternative and that that

alternative at least in the beginning of its development could be based on if not fully democratic values, at least clear democratic aspirations.

I lived myself a revolution when I was 25 in Portugal. We had as you know a rightwing dictatorship linked to a colonialist regime. We could call it a fascist regime. Probably that is not exactly an adequate definition. It was an authoritarian conservative regime. And we had the revolution. But after the revolution we had one year and a half of very dramatic social unrest and political instability and a struggle for power. The communists tried to take over and to establish a new dictatorship in Portugal. This is well-known. I think it was Kissinger who once told Mario Soares, "You are the Kerensky of Western Europe," so that many thought that Portugal was lost for democracy at the time. It was a very tough struggle with lots of economic difficulties. And in the end democracy could prevail for many reasons, I think the Portuguese have some responsibility in that, but there was massive international support, political support and economic support. To be honest, I do not see this kind of support available for Tunisia and for Egypt and for those who in Tunisia and Egypt want to take profit from this occasion to build a true democracy knowing that in Tunisia and in Egypt as in Portugal in the 1970s there were people trying to hijack the revolution and with good chances to win as they almost did in Portugal so that we cannot neglect that possibility.

I see Europe to be honest too divided in relation to the situation in Northern Africa. We have seen in Libya Germany against the intervention with France and Britain assuming a very active role. I see the debate in Europe more centered on the questions of closing the borders or the risk of people coming from the south into Europe, more centered on that than centered on support for democracy and to democracy development in the area. And I also believe that the way the Libyan crisis has developed

has created a very important new opportunity when one thinks about the relationship between the Arab world or the Muslim world and the Western world. For those who understand Al Jazeera Arabic, I don't, but our colleagues tell me what's happening, they see hour after hour, day after day Al Jazeera Arabic showing NATO forces as the good guys and I think this is new which means that in the Arab world, in the Arab street, Western intervention is perceived as a positive thing. This I think is an important element in the way political actors can maneuver trying to address some of the complex problems of the arc of crisis in all of its dimensions. So my appeal would be for a more concerted effort and probably for more active American leadership in trying to take profit of these opportunities and trying to use these opportunities not only for the promotion of human rights, refugee protection and democracy in this region that has been very complex from all of these perspectives, but also in taking profit of these opportunities to address some of the peace and security issues that have been unresolved for decades in the area. Our contribution is of course very limited and very small, but I think this represents a set of risks and opportunities. Politicians are sometimes experts in transforming opportunities into problems. I hope that there will be some capacity this time for some political leadership to emerge and able to transform some of the problems into opportunities.

MR. PICCONE: Thank you very much. You've given a lot to chew on and I know we've a lot more ground to cover and this audience will have a lot of good questions, but I want to jump in with a couple of thoughts that were sparked by your comments.

In this issue around Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, you're seeing a lot of new flows that we haven't seen before and what's been so striking is the number of migrant workers from sub-Saharan Africa in Libya who now need help. In today's newspaper the

IOM ship taking people out of Misrata is one very current example. Could you say a little bit more about, number one, that dynamic and to what extent it may upset the democratic transitions in Tunisia and Egypt as the spillover effect of the Libyan operation? Also the process in which those migrants are not probably going to return to Libya and how are they going to get back to their home countries, et cetera?

MR. GUTERRES: At a certain moment there was a massive outflow from Libya into Tunisia and Egypt, but especially into Tunisia. We joined efforts, the IOM and UNHCR, and we organized together with a certain number of governments that put a lot of resources at our disposal a massive humanitarian repatriation operation aiming exactly at these third-country nationals who were migrants in Libya and moving in big numbers.

I think it's important to distinguish two groups, those that have not really big protection problems that were fleeing because of the conflict and wanted to go back home and we helped them to go back home without problems. And many of the sub-Saharanans who were facing a very dramatic situation inside Libya because there was this idea that as Qaddafi had hired mercenaries from several African countries that they could be targeted inside Libya and we had some very dramatic appeals of support from people from sub-Saharan Africa. In any case, of the 650,000 people who left Libya until now, it's an amazing number, the overwhelming majority were nationals of third countries and those nationals of third countries were massively brought back home, and they wanted to go back home. They did not want to go to Europe contrary to what people think. They want to go back home and they were helped to go back home, and the numbers now at the border are very small.

The problem for Tunisia and for Egypt, and I have to say that they have

opened the borders and the Tunisians in particular were extremely supportive of all kinds of protection concerns in relation to everybody across the border, in Egypt we had some difficulties, but as a whole I think these countries have been extremely generous in opening their borders in an unlimited way. But as I said, this group of people that left has not been a problem for Tunisia and for Egypt. What is a very serious problem especially for Egypt but also for Tunisia is the number of nations that returned. We believe that there was about 1 million Egyptians in Libya and probably almost half of them have gone back to Egypt, and as you can imagine in a country that has a lot of unemployment that is how facing a economic crisis because tourism came down quite dramatically, to absorb all of a sudden half a million people is a big challenge. Tunisia has a similar problem on a smaller scale, but these require in my opinion massive support to allow them to be able to cope with this challenge knowing that both societies have high levels of unemployment and especially of youth unemployment. As for youth unemployment, I think there are about 400,000 young unemployed in Tunisia of which almost half with a university degree. This is potentially a group of population that can very problematic in a democratic transition. And of course the return from Libya only increases the threats coming from this situation. So this is one of the areas where I believe a positive attitude of international cooperation, namely eventually with some migration opportunities and I'm very sorry 20,000-something Tunisians have crossed the Mediterranean into Europe, this has created such an outcry. We have 1.7 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan and at the moment we have about 6 million, not 20,000 which is a little bit less, so it's sometimes difficult to understand how the political debate gets out of proportion with the reality that is behind it, but that's life and we have to live with it. But in any case, this return has been quite problematic for the economies and the societies in Egypt and Tunisia.

On the other hand, we have now two groups with clear protection needs. One group is Libyans who are now crossing. You have witnessed the fighting on the border with Tunisia on the southern part of the border and how Berber communities have been forced to move into Tunisia and this is a serious protection problem that they cannot go back. Again Tunisia has been extremely generous in supporting them, but it represents now a refugee protection problem that is serious and that we are trying to address together with other partners. On the other hand, we have a group Eritreans and Somalis essentially; a few Iraqis and a few Palestinians, but essentially Eritreans and Somalis who cannot go back home and they represent true refugees that are refugees for the second time. They were refugees into Libya and then they are refugees out of Libya and we have appealed for a global solidarity resettlement program for these people but until now the offers we've had are relatively small compared to the number of people who we are now assisting both at the Tunisian border there without any difficulties and at the Egyptian border, fortunately smaller numbers, but with big difficulties in relation to conditions to have the authorization to act and to erect the conditions to give more human assistance to them so that it is still a very challenging with the Egyptian authorities in the way these people can be assisted, but we have this protection problem that will need to be addressed.

In any case, it is also important to understand that Libya is an important client for Tunisia and for Egypt. That client no longer exists. With Tunisian exports into Libya, Libyans would buy lots of things in Tunisia they are not buying anymore so that the economic impact of the Libyan crisis in Tunisia and in Egypt is I think quite high and is one reason more for international solidarity. I think that the same solidarity that these two countries have shown to those fleeing Libya should be shown by the international

community and that's one of the reasons where I believe leadership is necessary because that solidarity is not happening. It's happening on a very small scale.

MR. PICCONE: That's a good way to transition before I take questions to a point you made toward the end of your remarks which is the question of U.S. leadership. You've just spent some time around town on Capitol Hill and I'm sure you've picked up a rather difficult political environment here in that we have a fiscal crisis with a strong political demand for cutting budgets, and then we have a very specific call by certain Republicans who want to cut the U.S. contribution to the U.N. in dramatic ways. I'm wondering if you could share with us how you see that problem and ways in which it is being addressed.

MR. GUTERRES: I am not going to give many opinions about budget deficits in the West. My own country as you know has a big budget deficit so I don't think I have much authority with that. But it is clear to me that you will not be solving your budget deficit problems looking at contributions to international organizations. I think you have two big questions to solve which includes your tax system and the areas that represent serious entitlements I would say especially related to Social Security and to wealth, et cetera. It's up to the U.S. to deal with those things, but to think that the budget deficit can be solved without addressing those bulky parts is in my opinion, even if you cut the entire contribution that the U.S. gives to international organizations and even the entire foreign aid of the U.S., I don't think that will solve the budget problem. I think the budget needs to be solved somewhere else. There you can decide whatever you decide, but it's not there that the problem can be solved in my opinion.

The question is if you look at the area, the arc of crisis, the budgetary implications of the arc of crisis to the U.S. are I don't know how many hundreds of billions

or trillions, but the budgetary implications of the arc of crisis to the U.S., look at your operations in Afghanistan, your operations in Iraq, your involvement in Sudan, and in Sudan by the way things are getting worse. I am very worried about what might happen in Sudan in 1 or 2 months' time. We looked at the referendum as a big success, but no problem has been solved. Abiey was not solved, the border questions are not solved, oil resources are not solved, citizenship is not solved. We are witnessing declarations that are more and more tough from both sides, recently Bashir saying that he might not recognize the south if the south would consider Abiey their constitution. We have now 12 rebel groups in the south. We have witnessed a lot of military operations in the south and hundreds of people have been killed. We have witnessed the pileup of military might both by the north and by the south in the Abiey area so that things can get very nasty. Again this is a very strong involvement for American foreign policy. The impact of Somalia in relation to piracy or in relation to terrorism, in this arc of crisis we are discussing very strong budgetary involvement from the United States. So whatever can be done solving problems to reduce this budgetary involvements will have a much bigger impact in the budget than what might be spent in support of international organizations or of countries of the region that have a chance to become true democracies. So I think that an active leadership which is in my opinion more needed in the political dimension in the economic dimension, but it has obvious economic implications, an active leadership in relation to Tunisia and Egypt as potential hopeful democracies, and Libya and the solution of the conflict, can have an impact that in the medium term will have substantially solve the budgetary problems of the United States. So I would argue in favor of an investment in these questions that I believe have potential very positive future budgetary implication because when one compares the amounts, we are dealing with two

completely different words, any military operation has a cost that has nothing to do with development, cooperation, much less with humanitarian aid. Humanitarian aid is just a drop in the bucket in relation to the real budgetary problems the U.S. is facing.

MR. PICCONE: Thank you. That's very helpful. Let's take some questions. We have someone with a microphone going around. If you could introduce yourselves and try to keep your comments generally brief so that we can get as many people as possible. And if you don't mind, maybe we'll take two or three in light of the time. I have someone right here in the front row whose hand was up first.

MR. BIN YUSUF: My name is Tareq bin Yusuf and I am the Deputy Chief of Mission of the Embassy of Tunisia. I want to thank you Honorable Prime Minister --

MR. GUTERRES: I did not know.

MR. BIN YUSUF: Prime Minister and Honorable High Commissioner for your leadership and the role of your organization in addressing the daunting challenge of refugees in Tunisia. You have highlighted the role that Tunisia is playing and I think you are the best messenger today in Washington to convey this message.

I want to pose back the same question. What was the response at the level of the Hill, of the Congress? You have seen Republicans and Democrats toward an expeditious and urgent package of assistance to Tunisia which represents a momentous opportunity for the United States and the international community which will have a diffusion and multiplier effect if these democratic transitions will succeed. How do you explain the slowness of the response? We haven't seen yet evidence of sympathy and love from the international community translated into concrete assistance, especially economic, and you have eloquently highlighted the urgency of addressing in the short

term the young people, graduated people, who are more than 160,000 in Tunisia and the Tunisian interim government has the urgency to create the conditions for these elections which are taking place on July 24 which will be the first credible and democratic elections. Thank you very much.

MR. PICCONE: Thank you. Let's take just a couple more before we come back. Will you introduce yourself, please?

MR. MCDONALD: Jim McDonald, Alexandria, Virginia. Recently several hundred Yemeni Jews were brought into the U.S. fraudulently under refugee programs. I don't know if the U.N. High Commission has any role in that or feels like they were victims of that as it affects credibility. I would be interested in that. If so, is the High Commission doing something to control the "offending refugee service?"

MR. PICCONE: Thank you. This gentleman in the pink shirt in the middle.

MR. BERNSTEIN: Jesse Bernstein, Human Rights First. Thank you, High Commissioner, for your presentation and your time today. One question I wanted to ask you in relation to resettlement is I think you're probably aware that one of the primary concerns of the advocacy community here in the United States and in Washington is the delays in the security checks for refugees who are coming into the U.S. via the resettlement program and I think as Americans we all urge and want effective and thorough security checks, but many of us are concerned about the delays and the negative impact on refugee protection. I wonder if there is anything you can say on this point following your discussions with U.S. officials here in Washington and any perspectives that you have on how the situation can be resolved.

MR. GUTERRES: First of all, to be absolutely frank, I think that there is

not yet in Europe and there is not yet in North America a clear understanding of what really in my opinion is at stake in the Lotus and the Jasmine Revolutions. I am afraid that there is not yet a clear understanding of how important it is to guarantee the success of a democratic experience in these two countries from the point of view of the democratic view in themselves but also from the point of view of the region and from the point of view of global peace and security. I don't think we are there and I think that all of us need to make more efforts to convince people about the urgency. I fully agree with the urgency and the need. And again it's not much. Egypt is probably more complex than Tunisia in relation to this, but for Tunisia to address the problem, it's not much compared with the possibilities that in my opinion are available to the major international players.

Resettlement is for us a very important priority. Vincent Cochetel who is now our representative in Washington has been the Director of the Resettlement Service that was created to both boost our capacity and improve the quality of resettlement referrals. We have doubled the capacity in the last few years and we have made an enormous effort to improve the quality of resettlement exactly to avoid fraud situations.

As an important part of the resettlement program into the U.S. through UNHCR referrals, but there are other projects that the U.S. develops. I don't know the case to which you referred, but I have never heard about it in the UNHCR. I don't think this group was through UNHCR, but we could check because there are other projects that are being developed without our input even if our referrals represent probably today 80 percent or something of the sort of the resettlement opportunities. There are risks of fraud. There was a very serious problem in relation to Somalis and there are risks of fraud and we are actively engaged in trying to address those risks of fraud. There are risks of security. We have now the active cooperation of a friendly government that is

represented in this room in relation to expert people in relation to security issues in our RSD and resettlement mechanisms. So we are very much concerned to make sure that there is quality in the referrals.

But in relation to resettlement, yesterday in our meeting at DHS we have I would say a very open dialogue with the Department of Homeland Security. In my talking points there were 31 issues so you can imagine how many things are being discussed from detention, to unaccompanied minors, to the material support bar and related things, to the situation of -- to changing regulations in approach to refugees and statelessness. So we discussed lots of things, but I would say one-third of the time was with the talking point referring to the situation you mentioned.

There are two areas, one area which is related to DHS regulations and one area that is also PRM and I think the two entities are working together very strongly with our cooperation in order to try to address the problem. The problem became very acute in the first quarter of this year because only 200 and something, 270 or whatever, admissions were possible during this period, but there is a very clear understanding of the problem and a very clear commitment to address and solve the problem so that's what I can tell you and the discussion was extremely positive.

We also have advocated for a certain number of other -- we would like to see the laws changed that is something I understand that is probably not exactly easy in the present context in the U.S. but at least there are some regulatory mechanisms in relation to the exemptions of the material support bar that are very important and we have discussed lengthy and sorrowly how this thing can be done, how decisions can be decentralized, delegations of authorities can be done and lots of other things in order to try to avoid the collateral damage of these security measures. We understand that

countries have the right to have their own security policies and to protect the countries, but to avoid the collateral damage of asylum in general and in resettlement in particular.

MR. PICCONE: Let's take another round of questions. I have two in the front here. Roberta?

MS. COHEN: Roberta Cohen, the Brookings Institution. I was one of the founders of the Brookings Project on Internal Displacement. As you know, we advocated over the years for UNHCR's leadership when it comes to the protection of internally displaced persons. I wonder if you could comment on the successes and also the challenges that UNHCR has faced in playing a greater role which it does in the protection of IDPs and whether you could also comment -- we had always advocated for greater attention to conflict IDPs and now there are protection problems for disaster IDPs and we wonder to what extent UNHCR is playing a role in the protection of displaced persons in natural disasters, the sudden onset natural disasters.

MS. PHILLIPS-BARRASSO: Kate Phillips-Barrasso with the International Rescue Committee. I wanted to move on to another situation in the Middle East, one that has sort of been overshadowed a little bit by everything going on there at the moment, that of Iraqi refugees which is one of the largest refugee crises in the world. You had called for a comprehensive plan to be put together in January both to deal with the situation regionally and internally in Iraq and in a year that the U.S. is set to leave Iraq and when we're worried about a lot of the attention being turned away, I'd like to hear a little bit about where you think that situation is in terms of it being resolved and not turning into another one of these protracted refugee crises. In addition that, we didn't mention all of the conflict going on in Syria at the moment and all of the disturbing stories that have been coming out this week considering double-displacement as you called it before in the

fact that Syria is the largest refugee-hosting country for Iraqi refugees, how you see the turbulence going on there at the moment causing another displacement crisis for those Iraqi refugees who already had to flee a few years ago.

MR. PICCONE: Let's take just one more.

MS. RABINDRANATH: Ariana Rabindranath with the Asia Society in Washington, D.C. Could you please address some of the unique challenges faced by women and children refugees and IDPs and also perhaps some of the progresses made recently in their protection? Thank you.

MR. PICCONE: IDPs, Iraq, Syria, women.

MR. GUTERRES: Conflict and internal displacement is something that now is fully assumed by UNHCR that it is our obligation to do everything to ensure the coordination of the so-called protection cluster in the context of humanitarian reform in relation to conflict and the internally displaced and we have no doubt at all in relation to our commitment. But when one looks at results, I think one needs to be realistic and I think the results are mixed. We have worked together very well with Walter Kellen. I think Walter Kellen played a very important role in relation to making things move in several countries by his active diplomacy and that was extremely important because in the end if the state doesn't do or allow protection to be done, not much can be done.

As you know, there is no longer a special representative of the Secretary General for the internally displaced. There is now a rapporteur of the Human Rights Council and I believe this downgrading of the function will represent a loss in relation to the capacity to have an influence even if the person chosen is a very good one I have no doubt about it. On the other hand, I've been feeling -- and probably this has to do with the changes of power relations in today's world. I have lived in a bipolar world, I have

lived in a unipolar world, I am living now in a confusing world that is no longer unipolar but it's not yet multipolar and sometimes we get the impression that nobody is in charge in some areas and of course impunity becomes -- that is why what's happening now in Libya is so important because it's clear that dictators are not allowed to do everything and it's sometimes it's good to have an example to show that.

But there has been in the recent 2 years a trend for dictators to feel that they could do whatever, that impunity was -- and I've seen the human rights agenda losing ground to the national sovereignty agenda clearly and that was a very strong limitation in the capacity to deliver protection in many of the situations in which we were involved in internal displacement. I have we have refined our methodologies. I think we have refined the capacity of coordination. We have improved the capacity of the different actors and NGOs and others. Cooperation with the ICRC has been extremely important. But even with all those improvements I think it's important to recognize that we are far from ensuring that those internally displaced by conflict get adequate protection. For instance to give an example, we have now massively increased our presence in eastern DRC with the support of the U.S. by the way and we are starting to see results in relation namely to sexual and gender-based violence which is linked to the third question in the eastern DRC, but it's a very slow process and to be honest the results are far from what I would like to see.

Natural disasters. We are in very active discussions with our membership in order to have an agreement for UNHCR to assume a predictable role in the coordination of the protection cluster in natural disasters at the country level. There were a few countries opposing, namely the U.S. was very reluctant in relation to that. I think we have overcome the opposition of most of the donor countries. We still have the

opposition of a certain numbers of countries in the south like Bangladesh or Lebanon to give just a few examples. I hope that in the June Standing Committee these will be finally overcome and that the UNHCR will be able to have a predictable role in the protection cluster in natural disasters which until now was not possible. There is full agreement in the context of the interagency mechanisms for that to be done. There is still some resistance from member states and we hope to overcome them in the short-term.

Iraq. We were convinced some time ago that we were making important progress. With the new government in Iraq the dialogue has improved and we believe that for the first time we see progress in the way to address the need to be effective in return and support to returnees both from the outside and from the inside even if there is a long way to go, but there were several positive things that happened at the -- initiative. For the first time there was a recognition of the dramatic situation of about 500,000 displaced inside Iraq in abject circumstances and the need to address this is a priority from not only our point of view but from the government's point of view, the admission -- between admission and action there is -- but I saw some progress being made. And the protection space in Syria and Jordan was guaranteed and there was return taking place. What we were witnessing is more and more -- we have about 200,000 Iraqis registered with the UNHCR in Syria and Jordan and more, but those who have registered for assistance, there about 200,000, the number has been decreasing slowly, but we are witnessing a core of people very vulnerable who need for support and for whom return is not so easy. So we were dealing this idea that we were going to face a protracted situation of a group for which of course resettlement would be a very important element of the solution, but then we would need much stronger engagement of the Iraqi government in order to be able to address the problem of creating the conditions for

return of these residual grouping difficulties. Now the situation in Syria is a new element. We have not yet any information of disturbance of our program of assistance to refugees in Syria, but of course one of the areas where there has been more opposition expressed is one of the areas around Damascus where our operation takes place. Until now it was not dramatically impacted but of course there is a risk for the protection space in Syria that is quite obvious. A few Syrians crossed the border into Lebanon, a few hundred in recent days. We have not yet noticed a massive displacement of Iraqis, but it's obviously a big concern because we took for granted Syria as a protection space for Iraqis and we would like that to remain independently of all the other aspects of Syrian internal evolution.

I think that one of the key concerns and developments of our actions is relating to what we call the Age, Gender and Diversity Project and its mainstreaming in all of our activities. The capacity to fully address the particular protection needs in relation to women and children has been growing but we are still far from being there where I want us to be. The situation is particularly sensitive in relation to internal displacement more than to refugee situations, but even in refugee situations for a variety of reasons, lack of adequate security involvement, lack of adequate assistance, cultural problems and dimensions in the communities, we still see a lot of discrimination against women and a lot of risks of women in relation to sexual and gender violence. And in relation to children we still have a lot of concerns in several of our operations in relation to recruitment and to other aspects of violations of the human rights of children that are particularly worrying so that this remains at the very center of our concern. I think we are making progress. It's clearly our priority or one of our central priorities, but there is a long way to go. It's not easy. There is a lot of resistance in the communities to make things

happen. If you look at the Rowinga community, that is probably one of the most discriminated communities in the world, to be a woman in the context of the Rowinga communities to suffer a double discrimination, the discrimination the Rowingas suffer and then the discrimination women suffer within the community so that it's quite a tough nut to crack.

MR. PICCONE: We've been at this for about an hour which is what we've promised. We're a little behind schedule because we got started late and I'm afraid we're going to have to wrap up and unfortunately I have to catch a plane, but maybe if you have additional time, people can talk to you on your way out. As you can see from this discussion we're very fortunate to have someone like Antonio Guterres in such an important position. Hats off to you and all good wishes as you tackle these crises. Please join me in thanking him for his remarks.

MR. GUTERRES: It's a privilege to be here. Thank you very much.

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CERTIFICATE OF NOTARY PUBLIC

I, Carleton J. Anderson, III do hereby certify that the forgoing electronic file when originally transmitted was reduced to text at my direction; that said transcript is a true record of the proceedings therein referenced; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which these proceedings were taken; and, furthermore, that I am neither a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

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