

**MINISTERIAL PLEDGING CONFERENCE ON SOMALI REFUGEES:
CONDITIONS FOR VOLUNTARY RETURN
21 October 2015**

Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat Statement

Mr. Chair, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This statement has been drafted in consultation with, and is delivered on behalf of, member agencies of the Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat (ReDSS), a coalition of 10 international NGOs working in the Horn of Africa and dedicated to the promotion of solutions.

ReDSS would like to commend UNHCR for the consistent and relentless efforts towards protecting and seeking durable solutions for the plight of Somali refugees—a protracted refugee situation in an asylum space that is constantly under pressure with new influxes of persons fleeing from conflict.

We thank UNHCR for the approach taken in seeking to engage a wide range of stakeholders in the process of developing the portfolio of projects for the return and reintegration of Somali refugees from Kenya.

ReDSS continues to urge that **projects need to be systematically and concretely aligned with longer-term solutions focused processes**, such as the Solutions Alliance and development priorities in the region to ensure solutions to displacement are sustainable. It remains a key challenge for the current strategy to be relevant toward both aid architectures of the UN cluster system and the Somali Compact.

ReDSS would like to continue to underline that the return process calls for a continuous and realistic appraisal of the return conditions. It is important also to emphasize that collaborative efforts with hosting countries remain cardinal. **Return should not be considered the only solution to a protracted displacement situation.**

Finally, ReDSS calls for a **strong coordination model on solutions strategies and initiatives for the Somali refugees**. Such an approach will ensure enhanced coordination and collaboration with the UN Country Team, political actors and other development actors for more strategic advocacy on solutions. In this regard, it is paramount that a steering committee be established to play a key leadership and oversight role, not only for this strategy but for other solutions oriented

initiatives. The Solutions Alliance could be one such structure to harness and ensure alignment of these initiatives.

In closing, ReDSS hopes that the above mentioned inputs, which have been raised throughout the consultation process, will inform the finalization of the Voluntary Repatriation Operations Strategy, and additionally that the portfolio of projects is part of a broader process not owned and developed solely by humanitarian actors, but in line with longer term initiatives both inside Somalia and in all refugee hosting countries.

Thank you, Mr Chair