



**Australian Government**

**Department of Immigration and Border Protection**

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Director, Division of International Protection  
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees  
Case Postale 2500  
GENEVA

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Dear I

I am writing to provide you with details of the composition of Australia's Humanitarian Programme for 2013–14 and to indicate the level and sources of referrals we will require from UNHCR to meet our current year's Programme. The composition of the Programme has now been agreed by the Australian Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, the Hon Scott Morrison MP.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation for the exemplary work of UNHCR in providing sufficient referrals to allow us to meet our increased Programme last year. I appreciate the significant increase to the Programme occurred part-way through our Programme year, thereby putting substantial pressure on UNHCR to make the necessary referrals. The professionalism and responsiveness demonstrated by UNHCR in making these referrals in a timely manner is greatly appreciated.

As you may be aware, the Australian Government intends to allocate 13,750 places to the 2013–14 Humanitarian Programme. Within this Programme, it is proposed to have an offshore component of 11,000 places. This will include a Refugee category of 6500 places, the majority of whom are expected to be referred by UNHCR. It will also include a component for resettlement under Australia's Special Humanitarian Program (SHP), for refugees and others proposed by relatives or community organisations in Australia, many of whom are likely to have been referred by UNHCR.

I note s. 22(1)(a)(ii) had a teleconference on 13 November 2013 with UNHCR Canberra, and the Deputy Director of the UNHCR Resettlement Service, Geneva, where we provided UNHCR with a breakdown of our proposed humanitarian allocations across Asia, the Middle East and Africa regions. This letter confirms some of the priority caseloads and challenges as discussed at the teleconference.

**Refugee Category**

We look forward to working closely with UNHCR to meet our proposed Refugee category. Given the significant referrals made by UNHCR in 2012–13, many of our humanitarian processing posts already have significant caseloads which will allow us to meet current processing needs. As a result, with some exceptions such as Syrian refugees, we do not anticipate there will be a need for significant immediate referrals from UNHCR. However,

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we are keen to work with UNHCR to build our refugee pipelines for the next Programme year beginning in July 2014. It is likely many of our Posts will be in a position towards the end of the current Programme year to accept referrals to build their future pipelines.

Within the Refugee category, the Australian Government will allocate 1000 places for the Woman at Risk programme, thereby reinforcing our support for this highly vulnerable group.

### **Special Humanitarian Programme (SHP)**

The 2013–14 Programme includes a significant restoration of the SHP category within the offshore component of the Programme. SHP places have been limited in recent years owing to the large number of illegal maritime arrivals to Australia. In 2013-14, it is proposed to return the SHP to previous levels and allow more opportunities for people in refugee-like situations to be reunited with their families in Australia. The SHP is designed for refugees and persons in need of humanitarian assistance who are proposed by relatives or community organisations in Australia. While the increase in SHP means there is a reduction in refugee places available, we expect that many people resettled under the SHP this Programme year will be persons who have registered and may have been mandated by UNHCR.

Given family reunion is a goal of UNHCR, we would be grateful for UNHCR co-operation where possible to help facilitate processing for the SHP component. We recognise that at particular locations in Asia and the Middle East, there will be a significant rebalancing of our Refugee and SHP allocations. As a result, we propose to identify existing applicants in the refugee referrals we have received from UNHCR who have close family ties in Australia for consideration of resettlement under the SHP provisions. This will ensure timely resettlement and family reunion outcomes for applicants. In these instances, we would be grateful for the opportunity to continue to access UNHCR teleconferencing facilities at some locations, including Damascus, to interview clients.

### **Priorities for the 2013–14 Humanitarian Programme**

The Humanitarian Programme for 2013-14 will include a significant focus on Asia, whilst also maintaining resettlement programmes from the Middle East and Africa.

#### Asia Region

It is proposed that around half of Australia's humanitarian intake in 2013-14 be resettled from countries in Asia. This is to underscore Australia's commitment to working in partnership with our neighbours to find durable solutions for long-standing refugee populations in our region.

Our focus in Asia will include a significant allocation for refugees from Myanmar in Malaysia, Thailand, and India. This remains one of our most important caseloads and represents Australia's ongoing commitment to this protracted group who have been waiting many years for resettlement.

We also propose to continue resettlement of Bhutanese refugees from Nepal in 2013–14. This will allow Australia to meet the commitment to resettle 5000 Bhutanese from Nepal which was made in 2008. It also ensures Australia meets the undertaking previously made to UNHCR to continue resettlement beyond the 5000 commitment. In addition, we

propose to provide SHP places for Bhutanese persons in Nepal. To ensure there is take-up of these SHP places, we hope to work with UNHCR to identify existing and potential refugee applicants with family links to Australia for consideration of resettlement under the SHP provisions.

In South-West Asia, we propose to resettle significant numbers of Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran. Australia substantially increased resettlement of this group in 2012–13 and the allocation this Programme year will continue Australia's commitment to this long-standing refugee group.

In our immediate region we propose to resettle refugees from Indonesia at a similar level to last Programme year. This demonstrates that Australia recognises the burden for Indonesia in hosting a large number of refugees and asylum seekers. We are keen to continue to work with UNHCR and the Government of Indonesia to ensure that resettlement of refugees from Indonesia strikes an appropriate balance between ensuring Indonesia is not left carrying the burden of asylum seekers whilst not adding to the pull factors to attract further people to travel to Indonesia. We appreciate the particular effort made by UNHCR in Indonesia to ensure sufficient referrals in 2012–13. We are keen to maintain the same level of referrals (75 per month) from UNHCR Indonesia to our Post in Jakarta this Programme year.

22(1)(a)(ii) has had discussions recently with the Donor Relations Unit regarding a new funding agreement between the department and UNHCR for UNHCR operations in Indonesia. I expect these discussions will be concluded shortly.

#### Middle East Region

Resettlement from the Middle East will remain significant in 2013–14. We will continue to consider Iraqi refugees but will focus increasingly on Syrian refugees.

As you will be aware, the Australian Government has already announced it will resettle 500 Syrian refugees in 2013-14 who have fled to neighbouring countries in the Middle East. In addition, it is proposed to make significant places available for Syrians with close family and community links in Australia to be resettled under the SHP provisions. Going forward, we expect to continue to work with UNHCR and the international community in future Programme years to resettle Syrians affected by the conflict.

In order to meet our commitment to resettle 500 Syrian refugees this programme year, we urgently require UNHCR to provide the necessary referrals. During the recent teleconference with the Resettlement Service, UNHCR indicated their preference to provide 300 referrals to our Post in Beirut, and the remaining 200 referrals to be provided to other Posts in the region including Cairo and Ankara. We are comfortable with this arrangement, but would also suggest referrals be made to our Post in Amman.

We appreciate the extraordinary pressures on UNHCR in managing the enormous influx of Syrian refugees into neighbouring countries and that all resettlement states are pressing UNHCR for referrals. To date we have received less than twenty referrals and are concerned that if we do not receive most of the balance by early February 2014 at the latest, we put at risk the places we have earmarked for Syrian refugees.



We are proposing a significant allocation for Iraqi refugees from the Middle East in 2013–14, with a focus on vulnerable Iraqi minorities including Chaldean Christians, Assyrians, and Sabian Mandaean. In addition, we are proposing a significant allocation for displaced Iraqis under the SHP provisions. It is expected Iraqis will primarily be resettled from Syria, but also Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey.

We would greatly appreciate the support of UNHCR to assist with the SHP resettlement of this Iraqi caseload. In particular, we would like to access the UNHCR videoconferencing facility in Damascus in order to interview Iraqi SHP applicants in Syria. The Deputy Director of the Resettlement Service provided an in-principle agreement during the recent teleconference for which I am grateful.

### Africa Region

Refugee resettlement from Africa will continue to be significant in 2013–14 and we will increase resettlement under the SHP.

The Refugee category will focus on refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia and Eritrea, as well as a smaller number of Somalis. This will include refugees located in camps in eastern and southern Africa, as well as from Sudan, Egypt, and Eritrea. It is expected that a large part of the refugee intake from Africa will be for the Woman at Risk cohort in recognition of the high level of need for this particularly vulnerable group.

### **Next Steps**

As mentioned previously, with some exceptions such as Syrians, we do not expect to require significant UNHCR referrals until towards the end of the Programme year. We have instructed our Posts to follow up with local UNHCR offices at key locations to discuss their refugee caseloads and any referral requirements.

We will continue to monitor the Programme during the course of the year and will also undertake a mid-year review in early 2014. We will advise your office should there be any significant changes to the allocations and our referral requirements. 22(1)(a)(ii) will continue to meet regularly with the Resettlement Service and as required, 22(1)(a)(ii) will participate in these discussions via teleconference. This will provide the opportunity for updates on delivery of the programme.

I will be visiting Geneva in early December to attend the Intergovernmental Consultations (IGC) on Asylum, Refugee and Migration Policies and I look forward to meeting with you then.

Yours sincerely



Wendy Southern PSM  
Deputy Secretary  
Department of Immigration and Border Protection  
6 December 2013