UNHCR- IOM Joint Press Release

Kathmandu, Nepal, Tuesday, 20 May 2014

90,000 refugees from Bhutan resettled

A major landmark was reached today when the 90,000th refugee from Bhutan departed from Nepal on resettlement. Eleven-year-old Suman Tamang left Kathmandu for Toronto, Canada, accompanied by his parents and younger brother. When they arrive in Toronto on Wednesday they will meet Suman’s aunt and cousin who were resettled three years ago.

“I was very sad to leave my friends behind in the camp, but I am excited to meet my cousin soon,” said Suman, spending some quiet family time at the IOM transit centre in Kathmandu before leaving for the Tribhuvan International Airport. “I hope we will be able to go to the same school which will be fun.”

The resettlement of refugees from Bhutan began in 2007. To date, over 5,800 refugees from Bhutan have been resettled in several communities across Canada, including Charlottetown, Saint-Jérôme, Quebec City, Ottawa, Toronto, Vancouver, among others. The other resettlement countries are Australia, Denmark, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The majority of refugees have been resettled in the United States - over 75,000 people.

The Chairperson of the Core Group of eight resettlement countries, British Ambassador to Nepal, Mr. Andy Sparkes said, “This is another important step towards resolving one of the most protracted refugee situations in Asia. This has been possible due to the strong support of the Government of Nepal and the excellent cooperation between the resettlement countries, UNHCR and IOM. The courage and resilience of the refugees has been a great motivation for us to continue our engagement with this refugee population.”

Of the some 27,000 refugees remaining in the camps, about 21,000 have already expressed an interest in resettlement and are expected to depart in the coming years.

A major exercise is underway in the camps in eastern Nepal in which refugees wishing to be considered for Group Resettlement are required to submit a Declaration of Interest (DOI) form to UNHCR before the deadline of 30 June 2014. After this date, no new DOI forms will be accepted and the Group Resettlement process will only continue for those who have formally submitted the DOI form to UNHCR before the deadline.

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