

# Foreword

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I welcome this publication as part of the global effort to maintain the momentum of the World Conference on Human Rights. The issue of human rights and the problems of refugees are inextricably linked. The vast majority of refugees are driven from their homes by human rights abuses. Persecution, torture, killings and the reprehensible practice of 'ethnic cleansing' generate huge flows of refugees.

Safeguarding human rights is the best way to prevent conditions that force people to become refugees. Respect for human rights is a key element in the protection of refugees in their country of asylum. Improved observance of human rights standards is often critical for the solution of refugee problems, enabling refugees to return home safely.

It is essential that the international community affirm and defend vigorously the right of people to remain peacefully in their homes and their homelands. This right to remain is inherent in Article 9 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which provides that no one shall be subject to arbitrary exile. This right is linked to other fundamental human rights because when people are forced to leave their homes, a whole range of rights is threatened, including the right to life, liberty and security of the person.

If I, as United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, emphasize the right *not* to become a refugee, it is because I know that the international protection that my Office can offer to refugees, in cooperation with countries of asylum, is not an adequate substitute for the protection that they should have received from their own governments in their own countries.

Securing the right to remain at home in peace – and the right to return home in safety – requires ensuring respect for the human rights of everyone. But the greatest need is for States to demonstrate the will, courage and commitment to implement these vital principles. The World Conference's consideration of the relationship between democracy, development and the universal enjoyment of human rights amply demonstrates the magnitude of the challenge.