
Dhaka, 8 March 2021

Mr. Johannes van der Klaauw takes office as UNHCR's new Representative in Bangladesh

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency is pleased to announce that Mr. Johannes van der Klaauw has today assumed his functions as the agency's Representative in Bangladesh, after presenting his credentials to the honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs, H.E. Mr. AK Abdul Momen.

Mr. van der Klaauw becomes UNHCR's 11th Representative in Bangladesh, in a partnership with the country that dates back to 1971. As the representative of the High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. Filippo Grandi, he will be the highest UNHCR interlocutor and partner for the Government, the humanitarian community, the civil society and the refugee community.

Upon taking up his new role, Mr. van der Klaauw said "It is a great honor to be UNHCR's new Representative in a country that has shown a remarkable generous humanitarian spirit and has offered safety and refuge to the Rohingyas for more than four decades. I look forward to building upon UNHCR's strong relations with the Bangladeshi authorities and people developed over the last fifty years and supporting the Government's leadership to ensure an effective humanitarian response that meets the needs of Rohingya refugees and affected Bangladeshi communities. Our joint efforts are aimed at sustainable solutions through the safe, voluntary, and dignified return of Rohingya refugees to Myanmar once conditions allow."

Following the presentation of his credentials to the honorable Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. van der Klaauw visited the Liberation War Museum in Dhaka to pay his respects and meet with the trustees of the Museum. On the eve of the celebrations of 50 years of Bangladesh's independence, he recognized the sacrifices made by the Bangladeshi people prior to and during the war, the country's impressive development journey since then, as well as UNHCR's long-standing and deep relationship with the country, which started with UNHCR's support to some ten million Bangladeshi refugees in India and their safe return home to Bangladesh when the war ended.

Mr. van der Klaauw, a national of the Netherlands, brings more than 25 years of experience with UNHCR in diverse assignments around the world. Most recently, he was the Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator in the Republic of Mali, where he led efforts to support principled and effective humanitarian aid across the country, for the displaced and vulnerable local populations. He also served as Humanitarian Coordinator in Yemen. He began his career in UNHCR at its Brussels office in 1995 and later served in senior positions in Iran, Morocco, Yemen, Canada, and the South Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia) as well as its Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland.

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