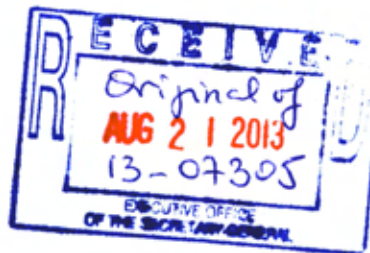




Central

PRIME MINISTER  
CANBERRA

HE Mr Ban Ki-moon  
Secretary-General  
United Nations  
New York



05 AUG 2013

Dear Secretary-General <sup>SG</sup>

I appreciated the opportunity to discuss with you Australia's proposed international meeting on the refugee protection system to be held in the margins of the United Nations General Assembly this September.

The urgency for the international community to address in practical ways the stresses on the refugee protection system is underlined by the alarming displacement of people arising from the Syria conflict and, closer to home, frequent deaths at sea as people smugglers ply their heinous trade.

Australia's intention is to defend the Refugee Convention by improving its implementation. Many aspects of the system are being examined broadly, including through the UNHCR's 10-year Strategic Review, in which Australia is closely engaged. Our proposed meeting seeks to address two very specific problems which we consider to be central to the health of the protection system. These are addressing the challenges faced by the current processing systems which are clearly struggling to cope with demands placed on them; and addressing the lack of resettlement options to make a meaningful impact on the caseload.

We aim for the meeting to be able to consider practical efforts that will address these issues. In our own region, I am pleased that Australia and Papua New Guinea, working in partnership, have reached an important new arrangement that helps address these issues. Our new arrangement provides for permanent resettlement in Papua New Guinea of asylum seekers who arrive in Australia by boat and who are found, after assessment by Papua New Guinea, to be owed protection.

This sort of creative approach achieves multiple ends – expanding resettlement opportunities, accelerating processing, improving burden sharing and breaking the incentive for individuals to seek the services of people smugglers and risk their lives in undertaking dangerous sea voyages to Australia. And it does so while at the same time respecting the letter and purpose of the Refugee Convention. This may or may not be an appropriate model for others to consider, but it represents new ways of thinking about making the Refugee Convention work better in current circumstances that I would hope the conference could consider.

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I have also indicated publicly that should this meeting be successful, and we see the successful implementation of the arrangement with Papua New Guinea, Australia stands ready to progressively increase the number of places in its humanitarian program.

I am open-minded about the specific outcomes and next steps for the conference but I would underline that we have no intention of reopening the Refugee Convention itself. The Refugee Convention must remain the cornerstone of the international protection system, but it is important that we extend the discussion beyond member states.

I would hope that you will be able to lend your support to the conference, and to attend the opening. Ambassador Quinlan will shortly provide your office with the details.

I have written to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in similar terms.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Kevin Rudd', with a stylized initial 'K' and a long, horizontal, wavy line extending to the right.

Kevin Rudd