

# Welcome address

by Steinar Sørli, Secretary General of the Norwegian Refugee Council

*On behalf of the Norwegian Refugee Council, it is a pleasure for me to welcome you all to this conference.*

## **NRC's interest in the conference is twofold:**

Firstly, as an NGO active in promoting the rights of the internally displaced, NRC wanted to look at the response mechanisms of the displaced around the world in different contexts and settings. *Caught Between Borders* and this conference are an attempt to better understand the situation facing the displaced by looking more closely at what they do for themselves and among themselves to respond to the trauma and upheaval of displacement. What we learned was a testimony to the ingenuity and courage of the displaced.

Secondly, while improved knowledge and understanding by themselves are important, the objective of greater understanding was to enable NRC as a humanitarian organisation to respond better to the needs of the displaced and contribute to the wider objectives of the humanitarian community. The challenge now is to ensure that this

perspective is included in the planning and implementation of all programme activities.

By bringing together experts from around the world as well as contributors to the book, some of whom are displaced in their home country, we can together seek ways to improve our response to the needs of the displaced and identify ways to enable us to better support the activities and strategies they undertake.

We hope that this conference will be a first step in defining practical methods and tools for both practitioners and researchers working with protection and assistance to IDPs on how to build on self-help activities and response strategies. Specific recommendations and workable proposals on how to proceed are needed. Equally important is the need to define responsibilities for follow-up.

The job will not be easy. As we watch events unfold in Afghanistan, the complexity of the task is clear. On the



one hand, humanitarian organisations need to respond quickly and efficiently in an emergency in order to avoid loss of life. At the same time, however, in order to respond appropriately, we need to understand and work within a complex and changing social fabric. How do we balance these sometimes competing interests and needs?

We hope that today we will make a small step forward in our understanding.

