



Speaker and moderator bios

Session: Conversation with the Director on the socio-economic inclusion of refugees in the COVID context

Date 21 June 2021, 14:30 -15:00 BKK time

Speaker	
 <p>Indrika Ratwatte, Bureau Director UNHCR Asia-Pacific</p>	<p>Indrika Ratwatte, a Sri Lankan national, began his career with the United Nations in 1992 as a Refugee Affairs Officer with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. He joined UNHCR in 1993 during the war in the former Yugoslavia when he was deployed in Bosnia and Herzegovina and later in Croatia. Over his career with UNHCR Mr. Ratwatte has served in Hong Kong, Thailand, Pakistan, West Timor, Macedonia, Tanzania and at UNHCR HQ in Geneva. Notably, during his tenure as UNHCR’s Assistant Representative in Pakistan, Mr. Ratwatte oversaw the first-ever biometric registration of Afghan refugees, enabling then large-scale voluntary repatriation. As the Deputy Representative in Tanzania, Mr. Ratwatte conceptualized and co-negotiated the Tanzania Comprehensive Solutions Strategy which resulted in the award of naturalization to 165,000 Burundian refugees in the country. Most recently, Mr. Ratwatte has served as Deputy Director of the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific in Geneva, UNHCR’s Representative in Pakistan and since 2017, as the Director of UNHCR’s Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific. Mr. Ratwatte holds a BA with Honours in English and Sociology at the University of Colombo, Sri Lanka, an MA in International Affairs from Columbia University, New York and has qualified as an attorney at law. He lives with his family in Bangkok.</p>
Moderator	
 <p>Mahmoud Awad Inter-Agency Coordination Officer External Engagement and Partnerships Service UNHCR Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific</p>	<p>Mahmoud Awad is an Iraqi national who joined the United Nations in 2010 as a Local Economic Recovery Officer with ILO/UNOPS in Iraq. In 2013, He joined the UN Agency for Refugees (UNHCR) during the Syrian refugee influx to Iraq, in the capacity of National officer, acting as head of a field unit. He worked in Iraq, Serbia, Greece, Turkey, and at the RB in Bangkok, Thailand. Most of his career was in response to different emergencies or covering a specific crisis in the field. Before joining UNHCR, he was an internally displaced person with his family for some time. They again found themselves internally displaced in 2014 when terrorists took a large area of their country. Thus, working for UNHCR is not a mere career; he believes in what the agency is doing to protect the forcibly displaced people. He graduated in 1996 with a BA</p>

	<p>degree in Arts. He worked in the public sector, mainly as an English teacher in secondary schools and later in the university, before joining the International NGOs in 2007. He is married and has four children, and they live together in Bangkok.</p>
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