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RCUSA ENCOURAGED BY OBAMA BUDGET, URGES MORE AID TO REFUGEES IN THE U.S.

Washington, D.C. – Refugee Council USA (RCUSA), the nation’s leading coalition of non-profit organizations working to protect the rights of refugees, commended the increase in international funding in the Obama Administration’s fiscal year 2010 budget outline. The coalition urges more funding, however, for services to refugees resettled in the United States. RCUSA pledged to work with Congress and the Administration in the coming months to ensure that adequate funds are appropriated to address the humanitarian and protection needs of the world’s refugees.

“While the details of the budget are not yet known, Refugee Council USA is encouraged by the overall increase in the international affairs budget. This is especially welcome at a time when the number of refugees and displaced people in the world—as well as their needs—are growing. The United States and the rest of the international community must increase assistance,” Robert J. Carey, Chair of Refugee Council USA, stated. “The number of refugees worldwide is increasing and now nearly reaches 14 million refugees—many of whom have lived in refugee camps for several years and without sufficient access to food, shelter, and livelihoods. Internally displaced people (people who have been forced from their homes because of war or conflict but remain in their home countries) now number over 34 million.”

RCUSA holds that the United States should continue its leadership role in offering protection, assistance, and resettlement to refugees who have been persecuted and forcibly displaced from their homes and families. The coalition strongly urges the Administration to ensure robust funding for Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA), Emergency Refugee Migration Assistance (ERMA), International Disaster Aid (IDA), and Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) accounts.

“We also hope that when the budget detail is released in late April, it includes resources necessary to properly address the needs of refugees resettled in the United States. The current economic crisis, which affects millions of Americans, has had an especially damaging impact on vulnerable refugees offered safety by the United States Government. Chronic underfunding of the resettlement program, coupled with lack of jobs in the current economy is undermining refugees’ abilities to integrate into their new lives in the United States. Refugee Council USA is urging the Administration to ensure that the funding made available to the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) is sufficient to meet the needs of resettled refugees,” said Carey.

RCUSA urges the Administration to provide sufficient funds to help refugees overseas and in the United States, as well as internally displaced persons. The United States should lead the world in responding to the urgent needs of refugees.

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