



European Union

Global Compact on Refugees

First thematic session 10 July 2017 Geneva



**Statement on behalf of the European Union
and its Member States**

Geneva, 10 July 2017

- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY -

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Co-Chairs,

- 1) I have the honour today to share these brief introductory remarks on behalf of the European Union and its Member States. We shall take the floor later in relation to more specific issues.
- 2) The European Union and its Member States have actively contributed to, and firmly stand behind the UNGA New York Declaration and the commitments of the Leaders' Summit that were adopted in September 2016. We support the process led by UNHCR to prepare the Global Compact on Refugees in the light of mixed migration flows and thank UNHCR for its leadership in developing and initiating the unanimously agreed Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework. We call on all States to fully use its potential and apply the CRRF in all large scale refugee situations. We thereby appreciate the efforts and leadership in this area of the 9 countries in Africa and Latin America that are already implementing the CRRF. We also recognize the significant efforts made by host countries integrating refugees into their national systems. We further recall that the New York Declaration applies to all States and requires more equitable responsibility sharing across the globe.
- 3) We thank for the organisation of the thematic discussions. We emphasize the importance of an active participation of all relevant actors, including non-governmental organizations, civil society, experts, refugees, and affected communities, which should help identify successful practices, which provide the basis for developing the Programme of Action complementing the CRRF.
- 4) The EU and its member States want to share their experience regarding burden- and responsibility-sharing, considering that the European Union is, as such, very much a regional solidarity arrangement. This also includes refugee situations. In this regard, the European Union and its Member States continue to work towards reforming their Common European Asylum System to agree a system aiming at a more equitable sharing of responsibility, solidarity and resilience to future crises. The EU Member States already contribute to alleviating the pressure on Greece and Italy, through assistance but also the relocation of persons in need of international protection. Simultaneously, the EU Member States have considerably stepped up their resettlement efforts fuelled by the EU initiatives taken in this area, notably through the implementation of the European resettlement scheme of July 2015 and the EU-Turkey Statement of March 2016.
- 5) It is also in the same spirit of collective responsibility that the EU and its Member States have adopted in 2016 a new approach to forced displacement. This approach is development-oriented, with a focus on reducing aid-dependence and fostering self-reliance and, as UNHCR

has at times mentioned, follows closely the line of thought of the Global Compact on Refugees. As a result, we have significantly stepped up our assistance in order to address forced displacement situations more comprehensively. Our support aims to improve access to services, create employment opportunities and improve protection for both the displaced and their hosts, while targeting, protecting and supporting those most vulnerable. Empowerment of persons in vulnerable situations and preventing and responding to sexual and gender based violence are also crucial elements in support provided. In this, we closely coordinate humanitarian, development and political action to be as efficient and effective as possible. This also includes significant support to the roll-out of the CRRF.

- 6) Let me share *five lessons learnt of general nature* that we have drawn from decades of our humanitarian and development policies:
- 7) *First lesson: forced displacement, including large refugee situations, is a complex challenge going beyond humanitarian action.* Political, human rights, security, developmental and economic dimensions must all be considered in our response in terms of solution and prevention. All actors, including local authorities, civil society, the private sector and diasporas, should be involved from the early stages and throughout a crisis.
- 8) *Second lesson: Refugees should be given a chance to improve their lives* and move from aid dependence to self-reliance; we should recognise their potential to actively contribute to the economy and society of host countries and communities; socio-economic inclusion through access to labour markets, education and services is of crucial importance. Refugee self-reliance will also increase the likelihood that solutions are sustainable, be it voluntary return, resettlement or local integration.
- 9) *Third lesson: forced displacement has a severe impact not only on displaced individuals and their families, but also on host countries and communities;* host countries and communities should receive adequate and sustained support.
- 10) *Fourth lesson: We acknowledge that solid evidence, reliable data and comprehensive analysis of refugee situations, including impacts on host communities, are crucial to formulate evidence-based and results-oriented policies.*
- 11) *Last but not least, a fifth lesson: the importance of an enabling environment.* Building and maintaining adequate *protection space*, that reduces vulnerabilities and empowers refugees and other displaced populations, is crucial to implement all the actions just outlined.
- 12) In addition, we would like to share *some comments specific to regional burden and responsibility sharing arrangements.* The EU and its Member State provide, indeed, an active support to all regional burden and responsibility sharing arrangements we discuss today. This includes not only very substantial financial assistance, with both humanitarian and development funding, but also active political engagement to facilitate agreement and implementation of joint regional responses to refugee situations. In this context, ensuring safe and dignified reception

and protection conditions close to countries of origin should be a priority. Allow me to share from our assessment the following *five examples of best practice* that we consider as particularly valuable in regional responses to refugee situations.

- 13) First, the added-value of *regional approaches*. They show that protection and asylum are not just national-level issues but require regional and global engagement. Regional level processes can be key to formulating context-specific strategic visions on durable solutions, exchanging best practice and setting ambitions.
- 14) Second, the need for a *comprehensive response, engaging all relevant actors*: refugee and resident communities, the countries concerned, civil society and regional organisations. A response that is underpinned by the international community lending political, operational and financial support as integral part of regional burden and responsibility sharing arrangements. The EU has been playing its part. Our humanitarian assistance is focusing on alleviating suffering and saving lives in all displacement situations. In addition, in relation to the Syria crisis,, the EU Compacts with Jordan and Lebanon aim at addressing host country concerns and simultaneously helping to improve key aspects for the refugees' self-reliance, namely access to employment and residence. This also includes cash-based interventions such as the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) in Turkey, which help maximise the economic effect for local markets while giving the most vulnerable refugees dignity of choice. In relation to the Afghanistan situation, EU development interventions include also support to capacity building of local communities and local authorities, livelihoods programmes with a local market integration component such as linkages with employment services centres, re-establishment of networks and ties between communities of origin and displacement, regional co-ordination of actors in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran
- 15) Third, the *need for joint assessments and response plans*, both on a regional level to ensure mutual commitments and on a national level to involve all relevant actors and use national response mechanisms. This can be illustrated by the Regional Refugee and Resilience response plan (3RP) for the Syrian situation or the Nairobi Action Plan that is currently being developed. They help coordinate action on the ground and sustain the commitment by all relevant actors. The Recovery and Peace-Building Assessments in which displacement is reflected as one of the key challenges for crisis recovery can also be mentioned. It is essential to put the individuals and their needs at the heart of theses assessments and plans.
- 16) Fourth, seizing the opportunity for sharing good practices and challenges to *generate a positive momentum in response to a refugee situation*. For instance, under the Nairobi Action Plan it is planned to hold a set of regional thematic discussions, including on education and self-reliance. In Iran, access to basic services for Afghan refugees, specifically in health care and education, has recently improved for different categories of undocumented Afghans. EU and Member states are actively exchanging good practices related to forced displacement.

- 17) *Last but not least, protection must remain an essential component of all regional agreements.* In our efforts it is imperative that States and international actors alike systematically include refugees and affected communities in the design, programming and implementation of regional burden and responsibility sharing arrangements. Interventions must be context-specific and address the specific needs and vulnerabilities of the forcibly displaced and their hosts, beyond legal status. This should in full respect of the humanitarian principles as the basis of humanitarian assistance. This is in line with the commitment to "leave no one behind", enshrined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by empowering the most vulnerable, including refugees. Special attention should be paid to women, youth and children, as well as to vulnerable categories including persons with disabilities.
- 18) Drawing on these lessons and in line with its approach to forced displacement and development, the EU stands ready to lend its support to regional burden and responsibility sharing arrangements in order to better respond to refugee situations.
- 19) I wish to conclude by highlighting that, in the light of mixed migration flows, the Global Compact on Refugees should in our view contribute to improving the international governance of mobility and develop tools and institutional structures accordingly.

Thank you, Co-Chairs.