



CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY
Third Round of Formal Consultations
on the Draft One of the Global Compact on Refugees
Geneva, 10-11 April 2018
STATEMENT OF LEBANON
Read by H.E.M. Salim BADDOURA

Item 2: Meeting needs and supporting communities (Part III.B.2)

Once again, we express our appreciation for all the efforts deployed by the UNHCR, and we acknowledge the work done in order to address some of the major concerns expressed by Host Countries, during our previous meetings and rounds of formal consultations.

Since it is the first time we take the floor, we would like to make the following comments on part B of the GCR draft one:

- We welcome in the GCR draft one the clear reference to the involvement of development actors to ensure complementarity between the immediate emergency response to refugees' needs and development cooperation, for the benefit of host communities, "from the outset of any crisis."
- In this regard, paragraph 58 is crucial by its insistence on the "particular support" to the needed development policies in hosting communities, if we want these communities to resist the shock of huge refugee inflows. Needless to underline that this particular support shouldn't be in any way conditioned.
- It is also of high importance to emphasize the fact that services should always be delivered through local and national providers. We also welcome the trend set by the GCR draft one that one of its major purposes is to avoid creating "parallel systems" benefiting refugees, but weakening national systems in Host Countries.
- Having said this, it is necessary to highlight that the success of all the measures enumerated in sections 1 and 2 of part B in the GCR draft one hinges on a well-functioning mechanism of burden and responsibility sharing. Or else, host countries will not be in a position to do more than what is done currently, and which is already huge. It

is noteworthy that, despite all the difficulties, Lebanon has always tried to improve the conditions of refugees by introducing new and adapted measures, for example by amending its legislation in order to facilitate the birth registration, the documentation of minors and the renewal of residencies, for the Syrian displaced population.

- Absent a robust mechanism and a real commitment on part of the international community to allocate the necessary resources to bring it to life, pressure will continue to grow on host countries unabated. And the GCR in its part B will appear as if adding to this pressure by multiplying obligations on host countries, even on those who are not part of the 1951 Convention.
- In this regard, in Part B, the 2030 Agenda of sustainable development goals is mentioned in relation with host countries efforts to support refugees. We think that prudence is necessary when linking between the efforts expected from countries hosting refugees and the 2030 Agenda for SDGs, since the goals set by this Agenda are broader than the refugees' issues as such. It is necessary to mention here that the citizens of the host State and citizens alone are entitled to hold it accountable for their right to development. And when we caution the international community against forgetting about host communities and only focusing on the resilience of refugees, it's not just out of mere fairness. The fact is that a thorough refugee crisis management is often predicated on the resilience of the host community.
- We approve of the mention of the legitimate security concerns in paragraph 48 with the understanding that the security concerns and risk assessments are a prerogative of the host State and a component of its sovereignty.
- We would like as well to inquire about the measures alluded to in paragraph 44 related to preparedness, contingency planning and early warning. The language is vague, and we don't see that these measures could be applicable everywhere. They could also pave the way for foreign political interference in internal affairs of some States, let alone the potential of such measures to add to the polarization of conflicts.
- On paragraph 56 that states that "fostering Refugees' self-reliance and enhancing their skills and education also better prepares them for solutions, notably voluntary repatriation, and can make these solutions more sustainable", we would like to stress on the fact that promoting Refugees' self-reliance must be clearly oriented towards a temporary, and only, access to some specific jobs. This should not be

a reason for return's indefinite postponement and should not defeat the incentives to return to the country of origin whenever it is possible, especially in Host Countries like Lebanon where Refugees' integration is not an option.

- In paragraph 59 on access to education, we should never lose sight of the durable solution that fits each situation. In that sense, we should stress on the importance of using the teaching language and a school curriculum that would facilitate the refugees' reintegration, when they return to their countries of origin.
- Finally we would like to see more clarity about the "asylum capacity support group." What would be its prerogatives exactly? What would be the guarantees for its impartiality? And is it clear that it will not occasion extra burden on Host Countries?

Item 3: Solutions (Part III.B.3)

Durable solutions are of major importance for a Hosting Country like Lebanon, we duly appreciate the efforts that UNHCR deployed in order to incorporate the major concerns that we have expressed during the first round of formal consultations.

- Generally speaking, the paragraphs dedicated to durable solutions have been expanded and improved.
- We welcome in paragraph 74 the clear mention to "one of the primary goals of the GCR" that is "to increase the availability of durable solutions", and to start planning for them, "from the outset of emergencies.
- We think that, among durable solutions, "repatriation" is paramount because it eases the burden on Host Countries significantly, and contributes to bringing back the country of origin to normalcy.
- We consider that all the efforts and measures taken by the international community and Host Countries in order to support the refugees should always be consistent, and never hamper the future arrangements for durable solutions, and mainly repatriation.

- We also appreciate the recognition by the programme of action of “specific context and circumstances” that would need the application of an adapted “mix of solutions”, far from one-fits-all solutions.
- We concur with the pronouncements of Paragraph 75 that recognizes that “voluntary repatriation is not necessarily conditioned on the accomplishment of political solutions in the country of origin, in order not to impede the exercise of refugees to return.” But needless to say, the aims of this paragraph would be defeated if, at the same time, the GCR goes into a lengthy enumeration of enabling conditions (some of them unrealistic) that should be met in the country of origin, in order for the return to take place.
- In the same vein, we concur with paragraph 76’ emphasis on the necessity for States and relevant stakeholders, including notably development actors, to “contribute resources and expertise to support countries of origin to address root causes, to remove the obstacles to return and to enable conditions favorable to voluntary repatriation.” But here again, the key to success consists in refraining from using the refugee crisis as a political card.
- The voluntary character of return is rightfully based on guarantees of safety and security. Hence, when the risks subside and these guarantees are met, voluntariness is no more justified as a condition; and therefore progressive return should become at the order of the day.
- Furthermore, when refugees can avail themselves again of the guarantees of the authorities of their country of origin, their return should be envisaged, no matter to which location in their country of origin. The return must not be conditioned by the availability or readiness of the “place of origin”, but rather by the availability or readiness of any other place within the country of origin. In other words, returnees may claim their right to determine their own place of residence, but only vis-à-vis the authorities of the country of origin, and not vis-à-vis the host country.
- As for resettlement, the GCR should find a stronger wording on resettlement which has the advantage of being both a durable solution and an important tool in any robust mechanism of burden and responsibility sharing.

- Nevertheless, we appreciate the efforts deployed by the UNHCR to overcome some of the actual obstacles in managing resettlement, by the inclusion of concrete steps like in paragraph 82. We clearly see that paragraphs 84, 85 and 86 on complementary pathways try to go in the same direction, by adding to the practical aspects of the GCR new draft.
- It is clear that resettlement could not be used as a substitute to return, but it is certain as well that if the GCR can bring about a surge in resettlement efforts, it will be a clear indicator that the international community is living up to the principle of burden and responsibility sharing.