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Agenda Item 8 – Review of the annual consultations with non-governmental organizations.

Introduction

Since the words 'The scale and nature of refugee displacement today requires us to act in a comprehensive and predictable manner in large scale refugee movements' were declared on 19 September 2016, civil society has developed many thoughts on implementation of a comprehensive, predictable refugee response. In June, the 2017 Annual UNHCR Partner Consultations, titled 'CRRF: Putting the Pieces Together' were the largest global opportunity for such reflection with UNHCR and peers. The meeting gathered 480 representatives from almost 250 organisations including humanitarian, development, human rights, faith-based, academic organisations and the Red Cross/Red Crescent movement.

The Consultations were a milestone event in the roadmap towards the Global Compact on Refugees. All chapters from Annex 1 of the New York Declaration were discussed. These diverse, practice-based reflections resulted in recommendations to UNHCR and member states made against **fourteen clauses** of the New York Declaration. An additional **forty recommendations** were made to States, UNHCR and civil society itself regarding implementation of the Comprehensive Refugee Response. **Thirty-one** of these have been or are in the process of being submitted to the database of good practice created by UNHCR for this purpose. You can read all of these recommendations in detail in the Rapporteur's Report which is now available online on UNHCR and ICVA websites and in the back of this room. Today it is my privilege to step beyond the numbers and convey to you three core themes illustrated by these recommendations.

1. Changing how we work: focusing on resilient persons of concern with agency in refugee response

Children, youth and women are the majority of refugees and we need to programme accordingly. Additionally, we should look not just at the challenges diversity brings, but see beliefs, ethnic background, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability, health, and social statuses as opportunities to 'bridge' between displaced and host populations.

It was clear throughout the meeting that NGOs are eager to go beyond business as usual with longer term impacts. In a **whole-of-society response, we should deliver humanitarian speed with development depth**. For example:

- All parties should invest in community structures and livelihoods that foster social cohesion.

- States should invest in incentives (ex. tax reductions for business, salary subsidies) that create win-win solutions for refugees and the marketplace.
- Countries of origin need to integrate returning refugees into national service provision plans (ex. education, healthcare). Services should include protection measures to mitigate vulnerabilities as well as livelihood training relevant to local markets. When such plans exceed country of origin resources to implement, donors (states and other sources) should deliver timely contributions to ensure the sustainability of returns.
- States and UNHCR should include measures in the Programme of Action to minimise the environmental impact of large movements.

We were also reminded of the benefits of development funds are in the medium to long term, the need for States to use such funds in complement to not in replacement of humanitarian funding.

Funding of sufficient quantity and appropriate modalities is critical to facilitate change. But, to change our ways of working, we need more than funds. We urgently need a clear path forward on predictable responsibility sharing. Burden and responsibility sharing that goes beyond financial support and includes complementary pathways is essential. Calling for a mechanism is not enough, we need a blueprint that:

- Increases resettlement options and offer complimentary pathways that better support protection of refugees in addition to, not in place of, existing resettlement quotas.
- includes clear **trigger mechanisms** to adapt scale and speed of response to actual needs of refugees, host communities and host states
- finances the promise to 'share responsibility' with **predictable, multi-year and flexible funding** to support refugees and host communities
- is as independent as possible of political shifts in donor countries and media trends

2. Strengthening participatory approaches

Strengthening participatory approaches with persons of concern and implementers was a key theme of the consultation as well. We were reminded repeatedly of the unique contributions of women and youth towards community well-being. All parties were challenged to facilitate opportunities for refugees to contribute towards solutions for themselves and their hosts.

The theme of refugee voices in CRRF was explored further at the recent meeting of the CRRF Reference Group, where participants considered what investment and governance shifts are required to move persons of concern from participants to **decision makers in response**. In the short-term this must start by translating CRRF into plain language and sharing it in mediums accessible to core refugee stakeholders. We cannot have a **whole-of-society response is most of society doesn't know about the CRRF.**

Participation of regional mechanisms towards solutions was also a key conversation at the Annual Consultations, with detailed discussions on the IGAD comprehensive regional approach for Somali refugees, the Uganda Solidarity Summit, and on-going efforts under the Brazil Plan of Action, all illustrating important additionalities to the CRRF.

Existing partnerships between UNHCR and civil society were also reviewed, with NGOs commending UNHCR for consistently working to provide space for such exchange and stressing the importance of the Principles of Partnership in whole-of-society approaches. NGOs underlined that it is critical to use all four pillars of refugee response as outlined in the New York Declaration and that **people not systems implement the CRRF.**

3. Upholding the centrality of protection and strengthening protection regime

During the Annual Consultations, a number of protection violations were reported in 'real time' to UNHCR and participants. The contrast of this on-the-ground reality with the discussions accentuated that the principle of **non-*refoulement* is the cornerstone of international refugee protection and must be at the forefront of every refugee response effort.** These protections should include:

- Host States and partners should provide unhindered access for refugees to humanitarian assistance including: access to legal identity, decent work, family reunification and services like education and health. All parties should work for the immediate birth registration of refugee children. This should explicitly include mitigation of statelessness risks.
- In CRRF indicators and monitoring tools, UNHCR and States should promote the six recommendations for protecting, promoting and implementing the human rights of children; the seven core actions for youth; and five commitments to refugee women and girls.
- States must strengthen cross-border coordination and cooperation in order to provide immediate and long-term protection, care and support for children in mixed migratory flows.
- States and UNHCR should address the multifaceted and multi-causal nature of displacement in the Programme of Action. This should further reflect policy coherence with the Paris Climate Accord, Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction, Sustainable Development Goals and the Nansen Initiative Protection Agenda.

Additionally, w**hile NGOs acknowledge the policy process for the two Compacts are separate, in practice on the ground they emphasised that a coherent, connected approach is needed. Clear issue-linkages between the Global Compacts on Refugees and on Migration** are needed, aiming at preventing gaps and promoting a continuum of protection.

During the Consultations, we also noted that the 2030 Agenda pledged that no one should be left behind, but Internally Displaced Persons, the largest displaced group in the world, are frequently unable to enjoy their rights. States and partners should work both to provide solutions for current internally displaced populations as well as towards preventing internal displacement in the future. With the 20th anniversary of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement this coming year there is also a push from the NGO community to 'get IDPs back on the agenda.'

Conclusion

NGOs have put in tremendous work in the years since the New York Declaration to put the pieces together towards the Global Compact Refugees in 2018, but as we brought the Consultations to a close, we acknowledged that this period between the New York Declaration and the Global Compact is a time of uncertainty. We've had a bold declaration on behalf of the forcibly displaced people and migrants, but there are tremendous questions about how it is to be implemented. Our predecessors must have wrestled with similar challenges, including fifty years ago during the process to adopt and implement the 67 protocol. Like them, we must and will overcome these challenges. **Let's all together, use our unique roles, skills and abilities to stand #with refugees in 2018 and beyond.**