

The Global Compact on Refugees -Zero Draft

Comments by

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1. General

1.1. In the part that deals with the INTRODUCTION, it would be necessary to provide a little bit of contextual footing addressing the pertinent questions including the following:

- What is the current state of play, in terms of the formidable nature and extent of the current challenge the international community is facing regarding refugees and migrants - an aspect which seems to be increasingly overwhelming and morphing into perennial crisis?
- What are some of the salient indicators of the seemingly worsening trend?
- How high are the stakes (what would the scenario look like) if the international community does not rise up to meet the challenge and ensure that appropriate measures are taken at all level to reverse the trend?

Addressing these questions at the outset is necessary to build a logical link to the rationale as to why the change of direction, anchored in broad-based partnerships and more equitable responsibility sharing, had to be globally launched through the New York Declaration adopted in September, 2016 and the subsequent efforts being made in the development of the GCR. Although a lot of background information seems to have been covered through the various other documents indicated in the footnotes of the draft text, it is important to ensure that the GCR document, as a consolidated piece, can stand on its own and providing the essential information to facilitate adequate understanding and implementation at all levels through collective efforts.

1.2. In view of the fact the GCR is based on a moral force reflecting the positive and favourable political will of the UN Member States, it is important to highlight some of the broad implications and related imperatives that compel the international community to come together, in a more serious way, to ensure effective management of the refugee issues in a complementary process involving both humanitarian and development approaches.

- How can the implications and related imperatives be justified and highlighted not only as a function of humanitarian solidarity but also as a matter of enlightened self-interest of all the stakeholders, as effective management of the refugee issues significantly contribute to a more stable and peaceful world order?
- With more broad-based understanding of the inherent dynamics between the effective management of refugee issues and the enlightened self-interest of all the stakeholders, how can all the relevant stakeholders ensure adequate and sustainable commitment contributing their fair share through broad-based partnerships and equitable/predictable responsibility sharing at all levels?

1.3. There seems to be a concentrated focus on the roles and responsibilities of the Member States and other institutions and organizations while the critical role that refugees themselves and host communities play, as primary stake holders especially at the local level, is not adequately covered in the draft text.

- Despite the emerging consensus as regards the need for a ‘whole-of –society’ approach , the actual focus in the draft text seems to be rather limited and concentrated around the roles that institutions, public or private, can play in the development and implementation of the GCR. Although the inclusion and engagement of the refugees and host communities in the process is tangentially mentioned in paragraph 26 under the section of A MULTI STAKEHOLDER APPROACH, there is a need to address this, with greater clarity and emphasis, highlighting the primacy of the role refugees and host communities play as primary stakeholders.
- The predominant focus on the role that institutions can play should not go to the extent of displacing or blurring the critical roles refugees and host communities, working in amore community based dynamics, can play as primary stakeholders facilitating the required actions including integration especially at the local level. Effective engagement of the refugees and host communities, supported by community-based organizations, goes a long way fostering the possible use of traditional and non-traditional practices in the effort to bring about solutions with more sustainable results.

It is, therefore, necessary to adjust the draft text to ensure that the GCR document reflects more balanced perspectives in a manner that encourages all stakeholders to contribute optimally within the dynamics and discipline of the ‘ whole-of society’ approach. In connection with this, it would be necessary to examine the following questions in order to address the roles refugees and host communities play, as primary stakeholders, in conjunction with the roles of community-based organizations

- What are the critical factors that need to be addressed to ensure that refugees and host communities effectively play their roles, as primary stakeholders, contributing to the development and implementation of the GCR and the Programme of Action?
- How can community-based organizations be empowered to facilitate the process in which the refugees and host communities effectively play their roles, as primary stakeholders, in the development and implementation of the GCR and the Programme of Action in a manner that leads to optimal utilization of both traditional and non-traditional practices to expedite the implementations of the desired solutions in a variety of ways including repatriation, resettlement and local integration?

2. Conceptual Clarity

Further to the earlier point regarding the need to ensure that the GCR document should stand on its own as a consolidated piece, it is important to ensure clarity as to how the various pieces can fit together addressing the related, lead questions in terms of THE WHY, THE WHAT and THE HOW.

- How does THE WHY can more precisely be established referring to the UN Declaration of September 2016 which proclaimed the intent with renewed commitment and stronger unity of purpose to transform the way the international community cooperates ensuring protection, assistance and solutions for refugees and supporting host communities as an integral part of the collective effort?
- How does THE WHAT more precisely be articulated referring to the CRRF, as a general policy framework, describing the content and the specific objectives in terms of what is to be done to implement the GCR based on broad-based partnerships and responsibility sharing at all levels?
- How can THE HOW be more precisely be described referring to the Programme of Action, as an operational instrument to implement the objectives with the required level of adjustment according to the specific operational context

3. Use of language and choice of words

3.1. The concept of burden –and responsibility sharing is reflected in several parts of the draft text. But this does not reflect the changing thinking and practice that strongly confirm the fact that refugees do not represent burden as much as they represent opportunities and benefits. It is important to ensure that all the references in the text are adjusted accordingly dropping the word burden and using responsibility sharing in all cases.

3.2. The concept of equitable responsibility sharing implies much more than giving a helping hand conventionally practiced in a situation where one party gives support and the other receives. Moreover, equitable responsibility sharing stemming, as it does, from a deeper sense of understanding of the fact that contributions made towards improvement of lives and livelihoods of refugees represent nothing less than a contribution towards ‘**a common public good**’ demands the participation and contribution of each and every one as a matter of solidarity obligation.

The process of working together towards the common public good, in the spirit of the GCR, should be based on a modality that reflects a growing culture of partnerships, rather than a mechanism of support or advice, with a fair share contribution from all the stakeholders. In view of the fact that the process should be based on solidarity obligation, it is necessary to improve the draft text replacing such words as ‘support or advice’ with other words/phrases that reflect, in a more nuanced sense, the true spirit of partnership without recourse to the

traditional arrangement where some may be regarded as the party in need of support while some others may be viewed as supporters. It is important to explain the novelty of the process of working together within the evolving principle of ‘a whole-of society’ approach.

- How do partnerships underpinned by ‘a whole-of –society’ approach differ from other forms of partnerships traditionally used in a variety of ways?

3.3. The fact that the implementation of the GCR is primarily based on the soft power of solidarity and collective commitment, in a direction that ensures broad-based partnerships and equitable responsibility sharing at all levels, should not be taken too far so as to weaken the impact of the changing policy and practice. However, the use of language and choice of words, in many parts of the draft text, leave a lot to be desired. For instance, paragraph No.14.under NATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS AND GLOBAL PLATFORMS, states that ‘Host States could, where relevant, establish national arrangements to coordinate and facilitate the efforts of national and local authorities, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and refugees working to achieve a comprehensive response.....’.

- The statement here, based on ‘could’, seems to attach no sense of commitment whatsoever on the basis of which the Host States can and should fulfil their side of the solidarity obligation which is necessary to ensure responsibility sharing with broad-based partnerships. It, therefore, necessary to adjust such statements, observed in many parts of the draft text, in a way that reflects a sense of robust solidarity and motivates the Host States to do the right thing (in this case by establishing national arrangements).
- In a more active sense, the statement can and should be paraphrased as ‘Host States will establish.....’- ‘to bring about the desired effect encouraging the Host States to fulfil their role within the bounds of their solidarity obligations based on jointly or severally shared interests, identification with the group taking part in the partnership process, disposition to empathy and mutual trust. In order for the GCR to work effectively, the use of words of a noncommittal nature should be avoided at all levels.

4. More clarity in the definition of roles of the various stakeholders

4.1. The indicative roles described in paragraphs 26 to 31, under the section of A MULTI STAKEHOLDER APPROACH, need to be further clarified and/ or qualified

- In some cases, the overall feasibility of some of the proposals may not hold true in each and every case, For instance, the reference, in paragraph 26, to low cost mobile phone and internet subscription as piratical working tools may not be readily applicable in situations where such facilities are neither available nor reliable. This may have a considerable weight given the fact that most of the

refugees are hosted in countries with low level of economic status and limited technological penetration

- In other cases, indicative roles are specifically mentioned in reference to some stakeholders, while other stakeholders may also play the same role/responsibility. For instance, the role focusing on engagement in development of a culture of non-violence and peace is mentioned in relation to **faith-based organizations** in paragraph 29, while other stakeholders, **civil society organizations/NGOs** mentioned under paragraph 28 can also play the same role in specific circumstances.

5. Follow up arrangements

5.1. The fact that the ‘whole-of-society’ approach, anchored in broad-based partnerships at all levels, defines the main thrust on which the development and implementation of the GCR hinges, assumes that all stakeholders are adequately kept abreast of developments in its implementation based on effective and efficient follow up arrangements.

5.2. One key aspect, among others, that needs to be looked at, in a rigorous process within the follow up arrangement, is the degree to which responsibility sharing is based on the desired level of equitability. This requires the development of standard tools with equitability indices embedded in the performance and accountability framework of each partnership. It is also important to ensure that the follow up and monitoring process is based a semi-independent arrangement with the required level of professional competence. A more active working link with the **academic alliance** may be considered as a possible option in this respect, as the process increasingly requires continuing research and analysis as a basis for ensuring evidence-based monitoring and evaluation.