



International Labour Office

**Statement of the International Labour Office to the
68th Session of the Executive Committee of the
High Commissioner's Programme, UNHCR
Palais des Nations, Geneva, 2 October 2017**

- The ILO welcomes the opportunity to address the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme, in particular in follow-up to the special segment today on the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework.
- The ILO has been actively engaged in the run-up and follow-up to the New York Summit last September and looks forward to working with all partners in the development of these two critical Global Compacts on Migration and on Refugees.
- While the New York Declaration and the Framework provide key entry points for collaboration between the ILO and UNHCR around durable solutions embedded in the principles of decent work, it is clear that there is much to do in terms of unpacking the intervention framework that needs to be put in place to make this a reality on the ground not only for refugees, but also for host communities.
- The "whole-of-society" approach that infuses the application of the Framework is critical and the ILO looks forward to engaging meaningfully within this process, including through supporting the presence of ILO constituents, including employers' and workers' organisations.
- In striving to attain the goal of durable decent work solutions for refugees and their host communities, it is vital to ensure the presence of world-of-work actors in the design, planning, implementation and follow-up to interventions.
- The ILO fully subscribes to the renewed focus of the UN on prevention and resilience. Certainly, a cultural change is needed through the inclusion of employment, education and training that creates significant opportunities to leverage decent work responses in affected countries. Nevertheless, the journey ahead will not be without challenges which further reinforces the importance of closer collaboration between UNHCR and the ILO.
- The bridge that will help us cross the divide between humanitarian and development action will now build on the foundations of the Memorandum of Understanding that was renewed between our two organisations last year and the action plan which will ensure the concrete operationalization of this global commitment.
- Combining the scale and scope of our agency mandates and operations offers significant potential to ensure durable solutions for refugees and positive socio-economic outcomes for host countries and communities, including once they can return to their countries of origin and commence the vital process of reconstruction.
- There is clear evidence that efforts to strengthen labour market integration of refugees can be highly effective in eliminating exploitative labour practices and help foster social cohesion and stability.
- In light of these growing movements and global processes, the ILO and its constituents have also been focusing their attention and discussions on the elaboration of a more

structured, coherent and coordinated intervention framework in crisis situations, including refugee response.

- In November 2016, the ILO Governing Body adopted a comprehensive set of Guiding Principles on the Access of Refugees and other Forcibly Displaced Persons to the Labour Market. These will further inform and underpin key areas of ILO engagement with UNHCR and within the CRRF programme of action, addressing among others:
 - governance frameworks on access to labour markets, ensuring full respect for international labour standards, social dialogue, decent work principles and international human rights and refugee law;
 - economic and employment policies for inclusive labour markets; and
 - equality of opportunity and treatment in the work place.
- And only in June this year, the International Labour Conference adopted a new landmark standard, the Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience Recommendation, 2017 (No. 205). This updates the guidance of an earlier ILO Recommendation adopted in 1944. Recommendation 205 is the only international normative framework focussing on employment and decent work issues in crisis response arising from conflicts and disasters. It widens the focus of the standard on reconstruction and recovery to include prevention and preparedness. It also addresses displaced populations, including refugee situations, in terms of access to employment and livelihoods, as well as the socio-economic integration of returnees. The Guidance aims at strengthening the efforts of member States to deal with root causes in countries of origin, both as a preventive measure and for improving the possibility and conditions for reintegration with safety and dignity into social and economic life of returnees.
- ILO and UNHCR also initiated cooperation within the framework of the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth, in particular through its thematic focus on youth in fragile situations. The Global Initiative is a unique UN- system wide multi-stakeholder partnership supporting the implementation of the 2030 SDGs with respect to youth employment.
- This reinvigorated decent work intervention framework will, in our view, provide much-needed support to the development of a comprehensive and people-centred refugee policy and response that will also benefit local communities.
- Our experience, expertise and knowledge is growing – particularly in the context of the Syrian response in recent years – and we are in the process of documenting and analysing these activities to refine and improve timely and targeted action in the future. The development of guidance tools and capacity-building will be key and we look forward to engaging with UNHCR and its partners during the CRRF thematic consultations later this month and in November. We also look forward to sharing good practices during the stock-taking exercise at the High Commissioner’s Dialogue in December.
- We wish you well for the important discussions during this Executive Committee meeting and to reaffirm the commitment of the ILO and its constituents in your vital endeavours for refugees worldwide.