

**Executive Committee of the  
High Commissioner's Programme**

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**UNHCR's Annual Consultation with NGOs  
Rapporteur's Presentation to UNHCR's Executive Committee  
Misikir Tilahun, Rapporteur for the Annual Consultations**

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of UNHCR's NGO partners worldwide, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to present the report on the 2010 Annual Consultations which were held in late June, early July. As you have seen the full report by now, my presentation here will only highlight some of the main recommendations contained in the report.

Many felt that the theme of this year's Consultations – "National Partners: Providers of First Resort" – was timely. As the scale of crises and humanitarian needs have significantly increased in recent years, national and local organisations have emerged as the critical means, and sometimes as the *only* means, of providing humanitarian assistance. However, despite a longstanding recognition of the need to develop the capacity of national organisations, very little has been done so far in translating this recognition to concrete action.

Today, NGOs in the global South face serious challenges, most notably in accessing resources to develop their 'institutional' capacity – capacity which allows them to be much more than simply contractors, implementers and managers of short-term projects. They want to ensure that the results they achieve are sustainable over the long-term. Essentially, they want to become autonomous, predictable and well-organized entities, able to develop strategies that meet their communities' needs.

To this end, the Consultations offered three concrete recommendations to stakeholders. Firstly, in recognition of the challenges faced by their national counterparts, international and inter-governmental organisations – including UNHCR – are asked to review and simplify their policies, procedures and structures to ensure that they are responsive to the needs of their national partners. This should be supplemented with sustained training and mentoring programmes on financial management, technical aptitude, accountability and resource mobilization.

Secondly, both international and national organisations should recognize – and benefit from – their complementary strengths and comparative advantages. In today's geopolitical environment where access for international actors is shrinking, we must recognize that local actors are better situated to design, manage and implement interventions suited for their communities. Thus, international organizations should begin to devolve decision-making power to national actors to increase local ownership, sustainability and adaptability to local situations. At the same time, national actors should do more to manage risks, ensure accountability and increase efficiency.

Thirdly, donors should review their policies and procedures to ensure that they do not place an undue burden on national partners. This typically happens when international organisations transfer complex requirements onto local actors. In addition, NGOs urge UNHCR to request the donor community to establish a special fund for local NGO capacity development.

Throughout this year's Consultations, one recurring theme stood out prominently: Partnerships are at the heart of effective protection and service delivery. From addressing challenges in urban settings, to finding durable solutions in protracted refugee situations; from reducing the vulnerabilities faced by IDPs and stateless persons, to protecting displaced populations from xenophobic violence; UNHCR is urged to continue enhancing its partnerships with affected populations, NGOs, civil society, local authorities, academia and other relevant stakeholders.

On preventing sexual exploitation and abuse of affected populations by humanitarian aid workers, NGOs sent two specific recommendations to UNHCR. First, given its experience and comparative good practice, UNHCR is called upon to provide leadership on the issue within the humanitarian community at large. Second, UNHCR's Executive Committee is asked to consider putting the issue of preventing sexual exploitation and abuse on its agenda for 2011. NGOs underscore this as an important step to push for implementation of existing policies in the field.

The Consultations also called for increased international action to protect the stateless. While NGOs recognized the need to better organize themselves in the form of an international coalition to work on statelessness issues, they also urged UNHCR and governments to take more ownership. Specifically, NGOs recommended for UNHCR to lobby the Hungarian presidency of the EU in 2011 to consider statelessness and statelessness determination procedures as priority issues during its term.

In addition, you will note in the full report that all the regional bureaus held separate sessions with NGOs. While the report contains specific recommendations from each session, it is apparent that there are common challenges in all. Access to territories, lack of asylum systems, prospects for local integration, shrinking humanitarian space, and limited resources present serious protection challenges in all regions. UNHCR and NGOs expressed mutual recognition that these challenges are beyond the capacity of a single entity to solve. They require the cooperation of all stakeholders – and crucially – of States. Thus, to bridge the existing protection and assistance gaps, UNHCR is called upon to strengthen its support to all relevant actors.

Finally, as UNHCR prepares to mark the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, NGOs expressed their willingness to work jointly with UNHCR to commemorate these landmark Conventions. The events present yet another opportunity for partnership to address the challenges presented by increasingly shrinking humanitarian, protection and asylum space. The Consultations specifically called for UNHCR – *and NGOs* – to lobby for more States to accede into the Conventions, most notably in the Middle East/North Africa and Asia-Pacific regions.

Mr. Chairman, The complete version of the Consultations report is in the back of the room. Again, I thank you for the opportunity to speak here today.