

High Commissioner’s Dialogue on Protection Challenges 2017: “Towards a global compact on refugees”

12 & 13 December 2017

Summary report

I. Background

1. The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (New York Declaration), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2016,¹ called on the High Commissioner for Refugees, in consultation with States and other stakeholders, to develop a global compact on refugees for inclusion in his annual report to the General Assembly in 2018.

2. The global compact on refugees will consist of two parts: (i) the comprehensive refugee response framework (CRRF), as contained in annex I to the New York Declaration; and (ii) a programme of action, which will underpin the CRRF and facilitate its application.

3. In line with UNHCR’s “roadmap” document,² the 2017 High Commissioner’s Dialogue on Protection Challenges was dedicated to taking stock of progress in the development of the global compact on refugees, including the outcomes of the five thematic discussions held between July and November 2017³ and the practical application of the CRRF in 13 roll-out countries.⁴ The Dialogue provided a final opportunity to solicit, consider and refine suggestions for the programme of action, before the preparation of the “zero draft” for formal consultations beginning in February 2018.

4. Some six hundred representatives from States, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and the private sector, together with experts and refugees, participated in a series of active and constructive conversations, focusing on good practices, lessons learned and suggestions for the programme of action. A number of written contributions were also received.⁵

5. This summary report does not necessarily represent the views of individual participants or UNHCR but reflects broadly the themes and understandings emerging from the discussions. It is to be read in conjunction with the summaries for the Dialogue’s six thematic sessions.⁶

II. Overview of the 2017 Dialogue

6. The 2017 Dialogue consisted of the following work streams:

- an **opening plenary**, including a high-level panel with speakers drawn from States and organizations representative of the “whole-of-society” approach endorsed in the New York Declaration;
- a **special session** to consider lessons learned and good practices in applying the CRRF;

¹ New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 19 September 2016, A/RES/71/1, available from www.unhcr.org/refugeecom pact.

² See further, UNHCR, “Towards a global compact on refugees: a roadmap”, 17 May 2017, available from www.unhcr.org/refugeecom pact.

³ Documentation from the thematic discussions is available from www.unhcr.org/thematicdiscussions.

⁴ See further the preliminary progress update on application of the CRRF, www.unhcr.org/5a2eb12b7.

⁵ Written contributions that have been received are available from www.unhcr.org/writtencontributions.

⁶ Available from www.unhcr.org/hc-dialogue2017.

- six **thematic sessions** to reflect on and refine suggested content for the programme of action under the following themes: reception and admission; meeting needs and supporting communities; measures to be taken in pursuit of solutions; contemporary protection challenges; complementarities between the global compact on refugees and the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration; and strengthening burden- and responsibility-sharing;
- three **roundtables** to consider elements of the programme of action in more detail, namely:
 - (i) gender equality: better protection for all refugees;
 - (ii) education: no one left behind; and
 - (iii) support to host countries: mobilizing additional finances;
- a **side event**, an operational stocktaking of the CRRF by international non-governmental organizations; and
- a **closing plenary**, with summaries by the co-chairs of the six thematic sessions, followed by concluding remarks by the High Commissioner.

III. Outcomes of the 2017 Dialogue

7. Building on the High Commissioner’s closing remarks,⁷ some key conclusions emerging from the Dialogue included the following:

- The process to date towards the development of the global compact on refugees, including the thematic discussions and the application of the CRRF, has generated a wealth of suggestions, lessons learned and good practices to inform the programme of action.
- While the global compact will support a range of different context- and situation-specific responses to large refugee movements and protracted situations, it will be anchored in the New York Declaration and have specific areas of focus. In particular, the programme of action will seek to reinforce the four objectives of the CRRF⁸ by establishing a predictable framework for burden- and responsibility-sharing on which States can rely.
- The goal of enhancing refugee and host community resilience, including through education, economic inclusion and livelihoods, has seen important advances. Such efforts are not undertaken in the spirit of adding burdens but rather in the spirit of sharing responsibility, and it is vital that they be matched by support from the international community, including development actors such as the World Bank Group.
- It also is crucial that efforts to strengthen self-reliance and resilience be accompanied by stronger support on the part of the international community to find solutions. Practical suggestions to expand resettlement and complementary pathways for admission to third countries will be an important part of the programme of action. Reference should also be made to addressing root causes in countries of origin to enable the conditions for voluntary and sustainable return as well as to prevent the need for flight.
- More generally, the programme of action will facilitate contributions by all stakeholders according to their capacities and abilities, and seek to devise modalities to include new and emerging partnerships in the response in line with the “whole of society” approach. UNHCR will seek to be a catalyst for contributions by others to refugees and their hosts, including development actors, the private sector and non-governmental organizations.

⁷ Available from www.unhcr.org/hc-dialogue2017.

⁸ The four objectives are the following: to ease the pressures on host States; to enhance refugee self-reliance; to expand access to third-country solutions; and to support conditions in countries of origin for voluntary return in safety and dignity.

- The programme of action will reflect an age, gender and diversity sensitive approach, and ensure that this is an integral part of crafting broader responses. It will also embed refugee participation, particularly at the local and national levels.

- A number of proposals made during the thematic discussions – including the global preparedness and response platform, solidarity conferences, and the asylum capacity support group – were further discussed and refined during the Dialogue, and promise to improve the way the international community responds to large refugee movements. It will be key that these modalities add value compared to existing arrangements.

- Close exchange and cooperation to ensure complementarity between the global compact on refugees and the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration remains a priority.

8. UNHCR looks forward to continuing to work with States and other stakeholders moving into the formal consultations phase of the development of the global compact on refugees in 2018, as we seek to transform the important commitments contained in the New York Declaration into action.

UNHCR
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