

## High-Level Officials Meeting Summary of the Roundtable on Self-Reliance

29 November 2021 (14:00-17:00 CET)

### Executive Summary

A virtual roundtable on Self-Reliance was held on 29 November 2021 as part of the lead-up to the [High-Level Officials Meeting \(HLOM\)](#). The event was opened by the Assistant High Commissioner for Operations, Mr. Raouf Mazou, and was followed by three panel discussions. The first panel focused on inclusion and resilience and was moderated by Dr. Ruba Jaradat, Regional Director, Arab States, International Labour Organization. The second focused on peaceful co-existence and was moderated by Ms. Kate Wiggans, United Nations Representative (Geneva), External Relations and Advocacy, Islamic Relief Worldwide. Discussing protection, the third panel was moderated by Mr. Ricardo Pla Cordero, Senior Protection Officer, UNHCR. Additional content shared by stakeholders during the roundtable is available in the [virtual space](#) for the HLOM.

The roundtable reaffirmed the importance of inclusive approaches to education, livelihoods, and health, and exemplified tangible progress in their implementation in several countries. However, overall progress has been slowed considerably by the pandemic. Limited data show that two-thirds of refugees live in poverty. The Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) indicator report shows that more international aid is needed to strengthen the self-reliance of refugees and host communities, including for their access to vaccines against the COVID-19. The roundtable also stressed that self-reliance can only be sustained when efforts are made to foster peaceful coexistence and social cohesion between refugees and host communities. Refugees are best placed to speak about their predicament, needs, and aspirations for the future, which must be taken into account in creating conditions for long-term peace. The power of faith organizations needs to be adequately harnessed to strengthen genuine resilience, help address root causes of conflict, and mitigate risks. The roundtable further highlighted the importance of ensuring protection frameworks are in place to enable self-reliance. Age, gender, and diversity considerations need to be mainstreamed in all relevant data, programming, and Global Refugee Forum (GRF) pledge areas. Further matching of pledges within the Asylum Capacity Support Group framework is needed to support States in strengthening their asylum systems. Close to half of the refugee population are children, and there is a need to scale up birth registration, child protection, access to education, and other children's rights, including participation in decision-making affecting their lives. To reach the objective of the #IBelong Campaign to End Statelessness by 2024, States need to ratify relevant international treaties, remove discriminatory laws and policies leading to statelessness, and broaden the base.

### Summary of Discussion

#### ***Opening remarks by Mr. Raouf Mazou, Assistant High Commissioner for Operations, UNHCR***

Mr. Mazou presented some of the key findings and recommendations related to self-reliance that emerged from the [GCR indicator report](#). There has been progress in the area of livelihoods, with three-quarters of refugees in countries surveyed having legal access to key attributes of decent work. However, access in practice to decent work remains far more limited, due to high employment rates, informal economies, administrative challenges, and other barriers. Participation in the social and economic life of host countries depends on freedom of movement and choice of residence. However, one-third of refugees do not enjoy freedom of movement under existing regulations. Self-reliance and resiliency of both refugees and host communities have in addition deteriorated in the context of the pandemic. Limited data show that two-thirds of refugees live in poverty. However, targeted assistance provided by humanitarian agencies, development partners, and Governments has been shown to mitigate exposure to poverty among refugees and host

communities. Refugees can access primary education on the same terms as nationals in three-quarters of countries, and secondary education in two-thirds of countries. Access to primary education is the highest in Europe (97%), Central Africa (90%), the Americas (87%), and the Eastern Horn and Great Lakes (80%). However, almost half of refugee students remain out of school, and refugee girls are still less likely to have access to education than refugee boys.

## **Key Outcomes and Recommendations**

### ***Panel 1: Inclusion and Resilience***

The panellists included Ms. Francesca Alberie, Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative Alumni; Ms. Catherine Ampah-Brient, Municipal Director of Health Service, Ghana; Ms. Barbara Daetwyler Scheuer, Head of Multilateral Division, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Switzerland; and Ms. Veneranda Ingabire, Coordinator, Single Project Implementation Unit, Ministry in Charge of Emergency Management, Republic of Rwanda.

The panel highlighted how inclusion in education, livelihoods, and health systems enables refugees to thrive and make important contributions to their host communities, including during crises such as the pandemic. It illustrated ways donors and other actors can share responsibility through supporting host governments to implement their commitments to including refugees in national systems. Ghana shared their experience in enabling refugees to access national health system, including its COVID-19 response and social security system. Rwanda shared their experience in refugee inclusion in agriculture and business cooperation initiatives and how this contributed to the self-reliance of refugees and host communities. The Education Alliance, a network of over 400 entities who have worked together on refugee education since 2019, shared how it has been able to make progress despite the pandemic, through providing psychosocial support, strengthening the capacity of teachers and caregivers, the third-country scholarship programme, strengthening education in emergency situations and on-line learning, and the launch in January of the Education in Emergencies Hub by Switzerland and partners. To address gaps in inclusion and resilience, there is a need for additional financial assistance, benefitting both refugees and host communities, in education, livelihood opportunities, and access to health, including vaccinations against the COVID-19. Strategies and policies that create an enabling environment where refugees can sustain themselves are needed.

### ***Panel 2: Peaceful Co-existence***

The speakers included Mr. Peter Barach, Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative Alumni and Refugee Representative, Kenya; Counselor Mohamed Kandil, Policy Advisor, Cairo International Center for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding; Dr. Azza Karam, Secretary-General, Religions for Peace; and Mr. Brian Williams, Chief Financing for Peacebuilding Branch, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, Peacebuilding Support Office, United Nations.

The panel highlighted deep connections between addressing displacement and building peace. Preventing conflict and addressing displacement need to go hand-in-hand. Participants affirmed that the greatest opportunity for solutions and self-reliance comes with sustained peace. Religions for Peace reaffirmed the role faith actors can play as contributors to peace, including to understanding peace in all its dimensions. The Peacebuilding Support Office noted that its multi-year strategy explicitly addresses forced displacement. It is an effort to work on these issues with the whole United Nations system, starting with the Resident Coordinators and focusing on developing durable solutions for displaced populations, addressing issues of access to land, localisation, registration, infrastructure, and data collection, for instance. Tangible operational examples were provided from ongoing peacebuilding work in Darfur, anchored in the Juba peace agreement, and in the Democratic Republic of Congo (Tanganyika) as part of a cross-border effort to support voluntary

return. Egypt's Aswan Forum is also a strong example of how a multilateral effort towards including displacement considerations in broader peacebuilding efforts is critical. Participation of refugees is a key ingredient in the success of peacebuilding processes. However, this participation can be hampered by lack of logistical support and refugee protection. It is key to invest in understanding and addressing root causes of conflict and displacement. The inclusion of refugees, including women and other diverse groups, in peacebuilding efforts is needed. The building of peaceful coexistence needs to be part of bottom-up and localization approaches.

### **Panel 3: Protection**

The speakers included Ms. Apajok Biar, Member of the Gender Audit Team; Mr. Julien Boucher, Director General, French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (OFPRA), France; Dr. Michelle Foster, Professor and Inaugural Director, Peter McMullin Centre on Statelessness, Melbourne Law School; and Dr. Najat Maalla M'Jid, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, United Nations.

The panel demonstrated how protection frameworks must be in place to facilitate self-reliance. Statistics of GRF pledges show still too limited progress in the implementation of Age, Gender, and Diversity (AGD) approaches (e.g., 70 per cent of GRF pledges made no reference to age, gender, disability, and other diverse considerations). Limited data disaggregation hides specific protection needs for refugees, including women, children, persons with disabilities, and other diverse groups. Stocktaking on the Asylum Capacity Support Group (ACSG) shows great promise as a mechanism for matching contributions and policy pledges, exchanging good practices, building effective partnerships (e.g., Niger and France), and producing tangible results. Children, who make up nearly half of the forcibly displaced, have suffered particularly from the impacts of the pandemic, notably in terms of poverty, violence, mental health, and lack of mobility and social life. The progress on reducing statelessness has been too slow. Many related pledges have not been fulfilled or matched by States and other actors.

There is a need to continue to improve data collection, analysis, accessibility, and disaggregation by AGD criteria to inform relevant programming for under-documented groups with specific and acute protection needs. AGD considerations need also to be integrated in GRF pledges through inclusive and meaningful inputs from the concerned population groups. Further matching of pledges within the ACSG is needed to support States in strengthening their asylum systems. To allow the mechanism to reach its full potential there is a need for States, and other stakeholders to pledge new offers of support in this area and for the ACSG to innovate, expand partnerships, and bring the expertise of multiple stakeholders involved in strengthening asylum capacity development. There is a need to scale up child protection and birth registration and ensure greater access for refugee children to national child protection systems. This also requires involving them in the formulation and implementation of policy and pledges. Pledges need to be gender and child-friendly and to be fully implemented. To reach the objective of the #IBelong Campaign to End Statelessness by 2024, concerted efforts are needed in areas that have seen slow progress, including ratification of relevant legal instruments, removal of discrimination that leads to statelessness from domestic laws and policies, early action to prevent new cases of statelessness from arising, and broadening the base of support.