

**ANNUAL TRIPARTITE CONSULTATIONS ON RESETTLEMENT
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Talking Points

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Chair, distinguished participants of the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement, dear colleagues. It is a pleasure for me to be here again this year and to extend to you all a warm welcome to the 2006 ATC.

A special welcome is extended to the delegations and representatives from countries with an interest in refugee resettlement.

Allow me also to give a particular welcome to my colleague Mr Vincent Cochetel, the recently appointed Head of Resettlement Service, who took up his new functions with the Department of International Protection Services at the beginning of May.

The upgrading of the Resettlement Section to a Service headed at the D1 Level is illustrative of the commitment of UNHCR to further strengthen its capacity to improve the stature and effectiveness of resettlement. To ensure that resettlement is fully integrated into comprehensive solutions strategies, particularly in protracted refugee situations, Mr Cochetel will also oversee the Solutions Operations Support Section (SOSS) in DIPS.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Ms Eva Demant and her team for the results that have been achieved by the Resettlement Section during the last four years. Eva has overseen the section at a time of great change and expansion, as the strategic potential of resettlement as a solution and a burden sharing mechanism has been increasingly appreciated.

The need to increase the focus on resettlement – both as a durable solution and as a strategic tool for enhancing protection – was highlighted during the Global Consultations in 2000-2001, in the Agenda for Protection, which was adopted by EXCOM at the Standing Committee in June 2002, and through the Convention Plus process.

The need to upgrade the resettlement function within UNHCR was as a result increasingly apparent to meet the heavier expectations of the resettlement countries and other partners.

Indeed, the rationale for the establishment of a Resettlement Service on 1 January 2006 is grounded in these expectations and the achievements attained so far by UNHCR towards meeting them, especially in the context of protracted refugee situations (in both urban and camp settings).

The creation of a Resettlement Service also falls within the context of reinforcing protection services, which in addition led to the creation of the post of Assistant High Commissioner (Protection) and the subsequent restructuring of Department of International

Protection (DIP) renamed the Division of International Protection Services (DIPS).

The Resettlement Service will give new impetus to efforts to strengthen and reinvigorate the resettlement function in UNHCR in order to better meet, shape and respond to the changing environment in which UNHCR's protection activities, including resettlement, take place.

Many positive changes have already been initiated by the former Resettlement Section, and these will be accelerated and consolidated.

The Resettlement Service will enhance outreach and communication with resettlement countries and other partners, as well as proactively promote, advocate resettlement and advance further resettlement innovations in line with the Agenda for Protection, the Convention Plus initiative and the Multilateral Framework of Understandings on Resettlement. It will aim to give a human face to the stories behind quotas and statistics, particularly important at this time when refugee protection and asylum issues are so beset by mischaracterisation of the beneficiaries and of their needs.

The Service, headed by a D1 level officer will bring additional authority to resettlement within the organisation. This post is charged with enhancing the visibility of resettlement both internally and externally through promotion and advocacy and being the 'public face' of resettlement to UNHCR's partners.

The Service will forge new directions for resettlement by strengthening interface internally and with key stakeholders (governments, NGOs and refugees). It also sets an agenda for UNHCR to pioneer new and creative ways of thinking, to address the global challenges head-on to deliver resettlement more effectively and provide leadership to enhance timely outcomes. This is an important time for the Division of International Protection Services and I acknowledge with appreciation the support of resettlement countries in steering UNHCR in this direction.

UNHCR is determined to champion a truly *service oriented* Resettlement Service. We can do this with your continued support while remaining true to the protection principles that underpin our mandate.

- The Service will encourage debate and address issues in a proactive and transparent way to find solutions and bridge gaps.
- The dilemmas that beset resettlement will continue to be identified and discussed openly so that we share a common understanding of the challenges and limitations of resettlement and work together (governments, NGOs and refugees) to resolve these for the benefit of those we serve to protect.

At this year's ATC, UNHCR will present the "top ten questions from the field" and a "discussion paper on the challenges in addressing

global resettlement needs". These presentations highlight some of the dilemmas and real-life challenges to resettlement. Let me give a few examples:

- Some offices are reluctant to identify specific refugee populations as being suitable for resettlement because of the difficulties this could pose in terms of resources, processing complexities and management issues. The identification of resettlement needs may suffer in that these challenges, not the actual and updated needs according to a thorough understanding of the refugee dynamics, can unduly influence resettlement decisions.
- In some operations comprehensive durable solutions thinking has not yet developed to a level that can be translated into practice. Constraints in this regard include only a limited capacity to do the proactive planning necessary to comprehensively assess and identify resettlement needs.
- UNHCR's capacity to address global resettlement needs may also be constrained by the particular priorities and criteria set by resettlement countries. Resettlement countries often determine the use and allocation of their resettlement capacity based on domestic considerations. Thus, which refugees are selected for resettlement, the size of targets and programs, or the priority accorded to certain populations may be more influenced by domestic interests than by UNHCR-identified needs, or indeed international standards.

Some of the questions raised in the discussion paper are:

- How can NGOs and other actors better contribute to strengthening the framework for global resettlement operations and the identification of resettlement needs? What steps can be taken by UNHCR, governments and NGOs to improve coordination on a needs based resettlement system, not least to ensure that multiple actors do not work at cross purposes?
- How can the *indications process* be made more effective in bridging gaps, avoiding overlaps and duplications, and contribute to improve coordination between resettlement countries and UNHCR in comprehensive planning for resettlement?
- How can UNHCR and resettlement countries work better together to minimize any negative impact resettlement activities may have on voluntary repatriation and/or local integration?
- What further measures, such as resort to pools, can be taken by UNHCR and the international community (including countries of origin, countries of asylum, resettlement and donor countries) to make more strategic use of resettlement in a burden-sharing context and in protracted refugee situations, including in camp as well as urban settings?

This is just a snapshot of the issues on the current agenda. An overriding one is the question of resources, which remains ever critical in shaping our capacity and ability to deliver outcomes and bridge the gaps. Challenges exist for all of us, and we share many of the same concerns; after all, we all work together – perhaps with different perspectives which is healthy – but we are integrated into a system that shares some common core values, goals and principles. Our job is to translate and harmonise these into different operational contexts; to put words into *action*.

A concerted and collective effort by all parties will enable the Resettlement Service to develop new ways of thinking about resettlement and achieve results. This dialogue should be *outcomes* driven:

- to foster an environment of shared vision and direction;
- to enhance operational effectiveness drawing out synergies and maximise potential for collaboration;
- find the balance between different solution possibilities.

The restructuring within DIPS will ensure resettlement is integrated more effectively within the overall strategic vision of UNHCR.

As in previous years, I strongly encourage open, frank and constructive discussion with a focus on results. At the centre of these discussions are the protection and solution needs of

refugees who remain the core of our concern in developing outcomes and actions for our mutual efforts in the future.

Thank you.

19 June 2006