

Speaking Points for the High Commissioner
Third meeting of the Forum
(1 October 2004)

Introduction

- General welcome and opening of the third meeting of the Forum.
- Note the “Progress Report: Convention Plus” (contained in document FORUM/2004/5), which provides an overview of the advances that have been made over the past months.

Burden sharing

- A key objective of Convention Plus is more robust and more effective burden sharing. The African Group has called for a better understanding of the contours of burden sharing, to make sure that we avoid the trap of burden shifting.
- As we will hear later, this issue has been firmly placed on the agenda of the Core Group working on irregular secondary movements, with a suggestion to discuss the human rights dimension of burden sharing – based on a useful paper presented to the last Forum by Amnesty International. This approach can ensure that we retain the focus on the people for whom we care; on adequate standards of protection; and on rights-based durable solutions.
- I would like to invite you all to take an active part in this discussion, firstly through your interventions today, then through a meeting of the Core Group. It is clear that the conclusions of this discussion will have an impact on all strands of Convention Plus.

Resettlement

- The Multilateral Framework of Understandings on Resettlement has been agreed by the Core Group. Particular thanks go to Canada for facilitating the work of the Core Group and bringing it to a successful conclusion. The Canadian delegation will make a more detailed presentation on the Multilateral Framework under agenda item 2.
- The Multilateral Framework now needs to be put into practice. I call on States and other actors beyond the participants in the Core Group to also adopt and use the understandings it contains to enhance ongoing and future resettlement efforts.
- I wish to emphasize again the benefits of resettlement for all: for those refugees who are resettled and for the communities who receive them. I also can benefit those who are not resettled yet, whose situation will improve wherever host countries feel that their burden is being shared by other States. More resettlement will also reduce irregular secondary movements.
- We need substantially higher resettlement numbers. I know this is a challenge for all of us. For UNHCR it means improving our own resources and systems. This is acknowledged in the Multilateral Framework, alongside other ways to make

resettlement available to more refugees – I have in mind, in particular, implementation of the group methodology and selection criteria that take account of the reality of contemporary refugee flows.

Irregular secondary movements

- What is also positive about the Multilateral Framework of Understandings on Resettlement is that it provides a model for the work of the Core Group on this strand (ISM) of Convention Plus.
- An ISM framework aims to bring clarity to the roles and responsibilities in addressing irregular secondary movements that will be of benefit to refugees and States alike. Once such a framework is developed, it can be applied in various specific refugee situations.
- The work of this strand builds on existing sources and responsibility sharing principles. On this basis, elements for a Convention Plus multilateral framework should include:
 - Early identification and registration of those in need of protection.
 - Strengthening regular asylum avenues.
 - Multilateral co-operation to provide more adequate protection and to give refugees real prospects for a new life. I note that, often, this aspect is greatly facilitated by the issuance of proper documentation to the refugees.
 - Clear understanding of the allocation of responsibilities of States for refugees and asylum-seekers who move through several countries.
- Refugees and asylum-seekers move for many reasons and there is a need to understand these better. The survey of movements of Somali refugees will contribute significantly to this understanding. It remains, unfortunately, underfunded. It would be a great pity if, because of shortage of funds, we would be obliged to reduce the scope of the survey (to less than the foreseen 8 countries) and/or to delay its successful conclusion.

Targeting development assistance

- In this strand, Convention Plus is guided by the Millennium Development Goals. MDG Goal 8, in particular, is about “developing a global partnership for development”. We can contribute to this goal by promoting the capacity of refugees to contribute to development and by promoting the targeting of a fair share of development assistance to refugees and refugee-hosting communities.
- The issues paper on targeting of development assistance to achieve durable solutions is available not only on our website, but here at the back of the room. It outlines possible elements of a multilateral framework or special agreement, focusing in particular on the parameters of the existing aid regime and proposing means to ensure the inclusion of displacement in aid policies.
- The issues paper also provides an impressive list of current donor initiatives, which are moving us in the right direction. In New York, UNHCR is presently working within the UNDG to finalize a guidance note on durable solutions for displaced persons for UN Country Teams preparing the Common Country

Assessment (CCA) and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF).

- A meeting hosted by Denmark, who is co-facilitating this strand with Japan, took place on 22 September to discuss these issues with UN agencies, the World Bank, NGOs, the OECD Development Assistance Committee and interested donors. Participants had a constructive discussion on the basic principles for targeting of development assistance, and we now have a clear picture of the issues which we need to discuss further with aid receiving countries.
- The next step is therefore to broaden the constituency by including interested aid receiving countries. Thus we will have a functioning Core Group under this strand, too. One initiative in particular where UNHCR is increasingly involved is the African Union's New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) programme. UNHCR is the convener of the UN Sub-Cluster on Post-Conflict. One of the key priorities is the promotion and implementation of integrated programmes in post-conflict countries to support reconstruction and sustain peace and stability. In close cooperation with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), UNHCR is analysing 15 African transition situations in order to identify where there are critical gaps and how to improve the effectiveness of our efforts. This exercise will inform future programme initiatives and contribute to joint NEPAD, UNHCR and UNDP work on a strategic framework for more sustainable return and reintegration of IDPs, refugees and ex-combatants.
- Much work remains to be done. UNHCR has been analysing Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) for refugee hosting countries and countries of origin. The analysis clearly shows that the needs of refugees returning to their countries of origin are not systematically factored into the PRSPs of countries of origin. Moreover, the needs of refugees and host communities are rarely, if ever, reflected in the PRSPs of asylum countries. UNHCR will be sharing these findings with the World Bank – and other interested parties.
- Pilot projects include:
 - Uganda: A focus group meeting will be held on 5 October, in which Uganda will present its SRS/DAR strategy supported by Denmark. The Ugandan Government has taken the lead in ensuring development assistance to the benefit of the Sudanese refugees in Northern Uganda as well as the local host community. It is hoped that other donors will join Denmark in supporting the piloting of this particular solution providing the first element of a wider and comprehensive approach to the Sudanese refugee situation.
 - Ethiopia: Japan will host a meeting within next few weeks to discuss and prepare a plan for targeting development for Somali refugees in Ethiopia, including support for their sustainable return to Northern Somalia. Here again, it is hoped that others will support the initiative which will also be an important element of the CPA for Somalis.

Comprehensive approaches and linkages

- The last meeting of the Forum (12 March 2004) closed with a remark on how Convention Plus relates to situation-specific and other initiatives: "I intend to use

Convention Plus to boost new initiatives, especially where comprehensive approaches are needed to bring protracted refugee situations to a successful resolution”.

- Comprehensive approaches are where the three strands of Convention Plus meet.
- This ambition is being realized in the Afghanistan Plus process and in the development of a CPA for Somalia, both of which will be considered in more depth later in this meeting under agenda item 4. As an introduction to this item, I will also inform you of other protracted situations where UNHCR is looking to develop similar approaches, particularly in Africa.
- Through Convention Plus, other possibilities for comprehensive plans of action are also being actively considered by the Office. The second paper presented under agenda item 4 proposes a methodology to make such approaches more systematic. This is in direct follow up to the discussion of protracted refugee situations in the Standing Committee in June this year.
- While the initial focus is on protracted situations, there a number of other situations being approached from a Convention Plus perspective, for instance:
 - Refugees from Colombia, especially in Ecuador, should be assisted in a more integrated way with the communities hosting them, through a DAR approach. One of the objectives of the forthcoming Mexico City conference to commemorate 20 years of the Cartagena Declaration is to foster enhanced political will and cooperation in responding to this refugee crisis. A comprehensive approach is needed, focusing on the chain of countries hosting Colombian refugees and addressing refugees problems associated with prolonged care and maintenance as well as the impact of refugees on host communities. It should also identify the most appropriate durable solutions; and, importantly, would link those to solutions also being pursued to resolve the situation of IDPs within Colombia itself.
 - At the other end of the refugee “cycle”, we must ensure that in West Africa the refugee and displacement chapters of recent years are being closed in a way that ensures sustainability of solutions, as well as regional stability. We have started to explore the possibility of convening in 2005 a regional conference for this purpose.
 - With funding from the EU Commission and three Member States, UNHCR is undertaking a Strengthening Protection Capacity project, focusing initially on four African countries but with great potential for “rolling out” to many parts of the world. The promise of the project lies in the regional and national consultations that will follow, which will bring together a broad range of actors including donor countries, the host countries, UNHCR, other UN partners, NGOs and refugees themselves to identify strategies to strengthen protection capacity and to secure the political and financial support necessary to do so.
