

## **Towards a global compact on refugees: thematic discussion two**

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**Room XVII**

**Opening plenary - Introductory remarks**  
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***as delivered***

Excellencies,  
ladies and gentlemen,  
colleagues and friends,

Let me begin by extending a very warm welcome, especially to those who have traveled from afar to share your insights as we delve into the detailed operationalization of each chapter of the comprehensive refugee response framework.

During these two days, I look forward to hearing your experiences and concrete recommendations from a diversity contexts and situations, both past and present.

As a backdrop for these discussions, I would like to open today's session by reflecting upon our experience to date with the practical implementation of the CRRF.

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Let us recall that just over a year ago, UN Member States unanimously recommitted themselves to the international refugee regime, while strengthening its application through the articulation of a "comprehensive response framework." At the same time, some 57 States translated the New York Declaration's commitments into specific, actionable pledges that they would undertake, as participants at the Leaders' Summit for Refugees. These pledges relate, on the one hand, to refugees' inclusion and self-reliance; and on the other hand, to more equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing, specifically through humanitarian financing and access to third-country solutions.

In the time since the Declaration's adoption, the number of refugees under UNHCR's mandate has continued to grow dramatically, reaching the highest level ever recorded, from nearly 17 million to more than 19 million today.

Meanwhile the disparities of what it means to provide international protection – to provide this global public good – are startlingly clear:

- 8 of every 10 refugees have found welcome *in the developing world*,
- while 6 of 10 have found refuge in *just one of 10 countries*.

This state of affairs underscores the timeliness and the imperative of the New York Declaration: that we must, as a global community, urgently work toward a more comprehensive approach to large refugee situations and, above all, one that is more equitable.

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**In this context, one year and one month on, where do we find ourselves?  
What are some of the generally-applicable lessons we have learned?  
And what must this mean for the path ahead?**

In these thirteen months, 12 countries have begun formally applying the CRRF, with Kenya the most recent to join.

There are two coordinated regional responses, in addition to national applications: the IGAD Special Summit on Durable Solutions for Somali Refugees and its Nairobi Declaration have launched the development of a regional response for Somali refugees in the east and horn of Africa. And next week, in San Pedro Sula, 5 Central American countries and Mexico will validate the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework and present their national action plans.

Just two weeks' ago, at the annual meeting of UNHCR's Executive Committee, several additional States signaled their interest in applying the CRRF, including in regional contexts, while quite a number related how they are actively applying the principles of the CRRF regardless of a formal announcement.

And a great many of the 124 States taking the floor at ExCom recognized the transformative potential of the New York Declaration and the CRRF, and paid tribute to political commitment and leadership of these first countries applying the CRRF.

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***Indeed, this leads to my first reflection: that the greatest strides to date have been by the pioneering countries applying the CRRF, particularly in the areas of refugee inclusion and self-reliance.***

**We have already begun seeing concrete changes on the ground.**

In the roll-out countries, we have seen national refugee protection frameworks passed - or in the process of revision - that greatly facilitate the social and economic inclusion of refugees through access to social services, national educational curricula, livelihoods and legal employment.

As one State explained at ExCom: "We believe that these **ground-breaking policy shift[s]** . . . will gradually transform [our] refugee response away from encampment toward one that pursues [a] development-oriented approach through job opportunities [and] increased access to social services, with a view to ultimately achieve self-reliance of refugees and promote resilience by fostering holistic socio-economic development in refugee hosting areas."

***This leads into my second reflection: a balanced implementation of the four objectives of the CRRF is imperative.***

After enumerating the *elements* of a "comprehensive response" – the chapters we will be discussing here – the General Assembly set forth *four objectives* for the framework's practical application:

- To ease pressures on host countries
- To enhance refugee self-reliance
- To expand access to third-country solutions, and

- To support conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity.

If progress to date has been most significant toward the second objective – enhancing refugee self-reliance – **it bears recalling that all four objectives are, in fact, interdependent and indivisible.** Attention only to the second objective, without a balance among the other three, will not be sustainable.

**We must therefore pursue all four objectives with equal vigor.**

With only 10 countries hosting 60% of the world’s refugees;  
10 countries providing 93% of UNHCR’s budget;  
and 3 countries accounting for 90% of refugee resettlement;  
the burden and responsibility for refugees rests for the time being with too few Member States.

The New York Declaration and the CRRF therefore call for a *broader participation* of all actors to **support the significant advances and commitments of host countries.**

For refugees and the countries and communities who receive and welcome them, solidarity must not only be heard, but also seen and felt.

In this regard, UNHCR welcomes the calls to enhance equity, predictability and transparency in burden- and responsibility-sharing in the programme of action. Identifying clear means to do so is a primary objective of these discussions.

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**Let me now share a few generally-applicable lessons emerging from experience of the CRRF to date.**

**First, we welcome an emerging “whole-of-government approach” from those traditionally viewed as donors.**

In the New York Declaration, States committed to a “more equitable” sharing of burdens and responsibilities for hosting and supporting the world’s refugees, specifically “*taking into account [the] existing contributions and the differing capacities and resources among States.*” [para. 68] **Thus a “whole-of-government approach” is required to expand beyond the traditional categories of donor and host, to encompass the potential totality of State action – that is, the full range of “capacities and resources” – that can be deployed in support of refugees and host communities.**

This means greater coherence and coordination between the provision of *humanitarian* and *development* interventions.

It should mean the exercise of political will to address *root causes*.

It should also mean *political support for solutions* through the peaceful resolution of conflicts; as well as pragmatic support for solutions through the provision of resettlement places and complementary pathways to admission, such as expanded family reunification, labor mobility, and educational opportunities.

And we have seen that “capacities and resources” can also include, for example, better conditions for *trade and investment*, as well as the mobilization of the *private sector*.

**The second lesson learned is the demonstrable value of broad and inclusive government leadership.**

In many host countries, the establishment of high-level government coordination bodies has provided strategic direction to the implementation of a comprehensive response. In line with the New York Declaration, these bodies can promote greater coherence and sustainability in the response through the **several types of inclusion**:

- first, of key ministries at the national level (for example, planning and finance) and sectors (health, education)
- second, of regional and local governments, who often bear ultimate responsibility for planning and service delivery, and
- third, of key partners, including the World Bank and regional development banks, civil society, the UN system, donors, and the private sector.

In some instances, these strategic coordination bodies have driven legislative reforms necessary for the broader inclusion of refugees in social and economic life. In others, they are playing a role in national consultations and dialogue, leading to the agreement of priorities and national action plans.

The inclusion of line ministries, such as education and health, enables the tailoring of sector-specific responses that also strengthen national and local structures. And this, importantly, accrued to the benefit of *both refugees and host communities*.

**Third: A comprehensive response to large movements of refugees entails both humanitarian and development responses – neither of which can substitute for the other.**

Forced displacement has long been considered a humanitarian concern only, and not part of the development agenda. In this, we have witnessed a fundamental transformation.

The President of the World Bank has explained that “We cannot achieve the SDGs without addressing the situation of refugees, especially when nearly 90 per cent live in the developing world. The long term solution [must be] to promote robust economic and social development in [both countries of origin and asylum].” Critically, interventions in support of displacement-affected areas strengthen the resilience and self-reliance of *communities* – communities that are comprised of *both refugees and their hosts*.

Just three weeks ago, the World Bank’s Board of Governors confirmed that the first 8 programmes submitted by refugee-hosting countries under the IDA-18 sub-window are eligible for over US\$ 1 billion over three years. This concessional financing is further reinforced by the data, analytics, and technical and programmatic support of the Bank.

In a similar vein, a number of host countries are now expressly including refugees in their **national development plans**. I was reminded of this by one of the CRRF countries at ExCom, who explained it best:

“We recognize refugees not as being in need of a handout, but as human beings, and human resources, as part of our national development. Refugees can contribute to the national economy.”

The mobilization of a multi-stakeholder approach – including development actors, who contribute to its sustainability – will enable humanitarian actors to dedicate their scarce resources to the *early phases of the displacement cycle*, where **impartial, neutral, protection-driven and flexible interventions** will always remain an imperative.

**My fourth and final lesson relates to the genuine inclusion of refugees and host communities in the refugee response.**

UNHCR is committed to ensuring that refugees are at the centre of decision-making concerning their protection and well-being. The concept of “meaningful participation” is well-rooted and reflected in our policies and practices.

Today, the CRRF provides a renewed opportunity to consider how both refugees and host communities can *systematically* be engaged in the planning and implementation of a comprehensive response. We can, and must, do better.

We are encouraged that the government-led Steering Committee in one CRRF country expressly includes refugee members, and we hope that other countries will follow this example. And we particularly appreciate the recommendations arising from the NGO Consultations, as well as written contributions provided by civil society groups, and *especially refugee-led organizations*, in this regard.

In concluding, I would like to ask you to ensure that refugee and host community participation remains a point of focus throughout all of the thematic discussions, with clear examples of good practice that can become part of the programme of action.

And I am grateful that Ms. Willent, our next speaker, will help keep this central to our discussion today.

Thank you.