

**Durable solutions and complementary pathways  
(EC/76/SC/CRP.12)  
Director of the DIP: Elizabeth Tan  
Standing Committee of the Executive Committee (93rd meeting)**

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Mr Chair, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased to introduce this Conference Room Paper on UNHCR's efforts to support durable solutions and complementary pathways for refugees. My colleagues, Axel Bisschop, Principal Advisor on Internal Displacement, and Sajjad Malik, Director of the Division of Resilience Solution will address respectively UNHCR's engagement on internal displacement and efforts on sustainable responses. 1

Over the past year, we have seen both progress and persistent challenges. The adoption in October 2024 of **Executive Committee Conclusion no. 117** reaffirmed our shared commitment to inclusive, forward-looking solutions rooted in protection, resilience, and sustainable development. It reinforces the need for early, multi-dimensional engagement, stronger partnerships, national inclusion, and expanded legal pathways—while emphasizing refugee agency from the outset.

The paper highlights key developments, including progress on implementing the Conclusion, to the extent possible given its recent adoption.

**In 2024, refugee returns reached their highest level in over two decades, with 9.8 million forcibly displaced people returning home, including 1.6 million refugees.** 92 per cent of these returns were to Afghanistan, Syria, South Sudan, and Ukraine—often under fragile conditions, raising concerns about voluntariness and limiting support for sustainable reintegration.

**Resettlement reached its highest level since 2016, with over 116,000 refugees departing in 2024.** Submissions exceeded 200,000, surpassing the Roadmap 2030 target. Yet in 2025, despite an estimated 2.9 million refugees in need of resettlement, commitments dropped by 85%, with stricter criteria, threatening resettlement as a protection tool and a durable solution. With over 75% of refugees hosted in low- and middle-income countries, every resettlement place is an act of solidarity. We urge States to sustain and expand efforts.

In 2024, **nearly 88,900 refugees were naturalized or were granted permanent residence**. Since only 26 countries reported on naturalization, the actual number of naturalized refugees is likely much higher. In South and Central American, countries like Panama, Guyana, Colombia, and Ecuador, are granting work permits, reducing risks of exploitation, and laying the groundwork for local integration. In Colombia, the Project “*Primero la Niñez*” provided for the acquisition of the Colombian nationality of children born in the country to Venezuelan parents through universal birth registration. This approach also secures the child’s right to a nationality and prevents statelessness arising from prolonged displacement.

We are also conscious of the need for investments that start well before a comprehensive solution is available.

Solutions are secured when persons of concern can access a durable legal status that ensures national protection of all of their rights, including through access to national services and systems, without facing any discrimination. This requires addressing economic, legal, socio-cultural, and civil-political dimensions to strengthen communities and reduce disenfranchisement. The conference room paper also emphasizes **the importance of inclusion and self-reliance as enablers to achieve any durable solution**. Refugees cannot rebuild their lives in isolation.

In Rwanda, Uganda, and Ethiopia, inclusive policies are unlocking refugee potential. In eastern Chad, the EU supported PARDERCA<sup>1</sup> initiative -led with WFP- is underway and aims to reach over one million Sudanese refugees and host communities. By issuing 50,000 biometric IDs and expanding access to online university courses via solar-powered centres, the program fosters inclusion, self-reliance, and social cohesion, marking a shift from emergency aid to long-term development.

UNHCR has reshaped its strategy in the Central Sahel, where escalating forced displacement, and protection needs demand new approaches with a focus on self-reliance and resilience; community-based interventions; cash-based assistance; and deeper collaboration with development and peace actors to ensure sustainable, inclusive solutions. This includes support to the Flagship Programmes of the Central Sahel- initiatives co-created with the governments of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger in

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<sup>1</sup> Projet d’Appui à la Résilience et au Développement des Réfugiés et des Communautés d’Accueil à l’Est du Tchad (PARDERCA)

response to their call for transformative support on thematic areas including education, food systems, governance, youth employment, energy, and health.

**Complementary pathways are also expanding.** Migration is not a new phenomenon. **Data from the [OECD–UNHCR Safe Pathways report](#) shows that nearly 215,000 refugees relocated to OECD countries and Brazil in 2022** through work, study, or family reunification. Opportunities for refugees to immigrate through education and labour mobility pathways are expanding. Countries like Italy, France, Japan, Canada, and Australia are integrating refugees into migration systems. These pathways reduce aid dependence and irregular movement, offering real alternatives. The potential of full inclusion of refugees in migration pathways cannot be undermined and UNHCR remains committed to advocating and supporting their expansion.

For refugees to successfully pursue work or study opportunities abroad, they must have the means to retain their international protection status. Encouraging efforts to expand access to machine-readable refugee travel documents in Chile, Ethiopia, and Egypt are vital. Eligibility for pathways also depends on inclusion in national systems for documentation, skills certification, and training.

Refugee participation in planning for solutions is essential. Solutions are most effective when shaped by those they serve. By ensuring that refugees have a voice in shaping their futures, we help create viable alternatives to irregular movement—so that people are not forced to leave simply because they see no other option.

Intentions surveys are a vital tool for UNHCR to identify trends, barriers and enablers for solutions so that these inform UNHCR's operational engagement, joined up area-based approaches and advocacy for policy reforms. In Ukraine, UNHCR closely collaborate with the government, the private sector, international financial institutions and UN agencies to drive inclusive economic recovery.

Innovative platforms like *Ukraine is Home* and *Syria is Home*, support informed decision-making while “go-and-see” visits allow refugees to assess conditions firsthand and are the strongest foundation for solutions that are durable and that promise a return to ordinary life.

Durable solutions require international cooperation, and our partnership remains essential, but let us not stop at cooperation- let's commit to a future where displacement is not a lifelong issue, but a temporary chapter. Let us invest in inclusion, expand legal pathways, and empower refugees to shape their own futures. Let us work with urgency to ensure that no one is left behind, and that every refugee finds a place to call home. Thank you.