

Asylum Capacity Development

Division of International Protection, Ms. Elizabeth Tan
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Chair, distinguished delegates, colleagues,

It is my pleasure to present this paper outlining UNHCR's reinforced approach to strengthening national asylum systems—an approach shaped over recent years in response to the growing need to support States in delivering fair, effective, and sustainable asylum procedures.

Today, national asylum systems are under immense pressure. Applications continue to rise, driven by both new and protracted crises. At the same time, many individuals without international protection needs are turning to asylum procedures to regularize their stay—often due to the lack of alternative migration pathways.

In this context, the urgency of strengthening asylum systems cannot be overstated. Refugees must be able to access life-saving protection, services, and solutions. At the same time, quality asylum procedures help States manage resources more efficiently, reduce strain on reception systems, and facilitate the return of those not in need of international protection.

Supporting States in building strong asylum systems is central to UNHCR's mandate and our supervisory role under the 1951 Convention. Over the years, our collaboration with governments has led to significant progress—not only in the number of operational asylum systems, but also in their quality and capacity.

Yet, challenges remain. Many systems still face institutional and structural limitations, and sustainability continues to be a concern.

To address these challenges, UNHCR has reassessed and refined its approach. We are now embracing a more holistic, strategic model—one that promotes integrated, resilient, and adaptable asylum systems. This approach is grounded in evidence, focused on long-term impact, and designed to respond to evolving contexts.

A key element of this shift is our broader framework for capacity development. It emphasizes partnerships and encourages the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders—including regional organizations and initiatives like the Asylum Capacity Support Group, a key component of the Global Compact on Refugees.

Our support is now focused on five core areas: law and policy frameworks, institutional performance, procedural effectiveness through differentiated case

processing modalities, workforce capacities and effective participation of asylum-seekers through information and legal representation.

To consolidate this shift, UNHCR is finalizing a new strategy that will guide our engagement in this area. Developed through consultations with partners, the strategy draws on best practices in development to drive meaningful, lasting change as the two functions of providing protection and finding solutions are mutually reinforcing.

To operationalize this strategy, we will take several enabling actions. These include reinforcing our role as a thought leader on asylum, enhancing our capacity to deliver structured and context-specific support, and leveraging technology for early data collection and protection-sensitive innovation.

The strategy also promotes multi-stakeholder advocacy and cross-sectoral learning. It encourages engagement with development actors and fosters knowledge exchange across regions and disciplines.

Importantly, implementation will be tailored to each context, recognizing the unique strengths, challenges, and needs of every national asylum system.

This work is central to UNHCR's broader focus on sustainable responses and development-oriented approaches. It reflects our commitment to national ownership and long-term impact.

In closing, I urge all of you—governments, civil society, development partners, and international organizations—to join us in this effort. Let us work together to build asylum systems that are not only fair and efficient, but also resilient and future ready.

Let us commit to a whole-of-society approach—one that ensures that every person seeking protection is treated with dignity, and every State is equipped to uphold its responsibilities.

Thank you.