**Executive Committee of the
High Commissioner's Programme**

**Standing Committee
54th meeting**

Progress report on resettlement

Contents

I.   Introduction

1.   This paper offers an overview of UNHCR's resettlement activities, undertaken in close cooperation with its partners, since its last progress report provided in June 2010. It reviews recent developments in the global resettlement progamme, and outlines current challenges and measures underway to address them. The report further considers ways of enhancing resettlement as a protection tool and as an essential component of comprehensive solutions frameworks in a number of selected refugee situations.

II.   Global resettlement capacity

2.   Since June 2010, four new countries formally announced that they were establishing resettlement programmes, namely, Bulgaria, Germany, Hungary, and Spain, thus broadening the resettlement base to twenty-six countries worldwide. In addition, emerging resettlement countries, including Japan, Paraguay, and Romania, started implementing their resettlement programmes. A number of other countries continued to provide resettlement places on an ad hoc basis. Another recent positive development was the adoption of the joint EU resettlement programme, which is intended to increase the number of resettlement places made available in the European Union, harmonize and coordinate resettlement priorities among EU member States, and contribute to greater funding opportunities for resettlement.

3.   However, the number of resettlement places made available worldwide has not increased in parallel with the expansion in the number of resettlement countries, and continues to stand at some 80,000 available places annually. New resettlement countries are initially able to offer only a very limited number of places as they require time, resources, and capacity-building in order to implement and develop their resettlement programmes. With the exception of Canada, no traditional resettlement country has increased its existing quota in a substantial way. Overall, ninety per cent of resettlement places are provided by three countries, including the United States of America, Canada, and Australia, while sixteen European countries provide 8 per cent of global resettlement places. Five Latin American countries continue to offer a small number of resettlement places for Colombian refugees from the region, and in Asia, Japan (which is implementing a small pilot programme) is the only resettlement country.

4.   It is estimated that some 800,000 refugees globally are in need of resettlement, which continues to far outstrip the number of resettlement places available each year. This means that only one in every ten refugees at risk and in need of resettlement will be able to secure the protection they require through this durable solution. UNHCR will continue to work towards rectifying this imbalance by advocating with resettlement countries and the wider international community to initiate and expand resettlement programmes and quotas; encouraging countries that provide resettlement on an ad hoc basis to develop more predictable, regular programmes; and maximizing the opportunities presented by the joint EU resettlement programme to increase support for this solution within the European Union.

III.   Resettlement processing

5.   In the past, despite the number of resettlement places available not increasing significantly, the overall scope and volume of resettlement activity had expanded considerably, with notable increases in resettlement submissions and departures of refugees for resettlement countries. Yet during the reporting period, both submission and departure levels declined markedly. The number of submissions dropped from a peak of 128,000 in 2009, to 108,000 in 2010, and 92,000 in 2011, representing decreases by 16 per cent and 28 per cent respectively over the course of three years. Submission levels declined for a variety of reasons, not least due to the time involved in processing complex cases for certain refugee populations undergoing large-scale resettlement. Decreasing levels may also be attributed to the decision taken by UNHCR to align its submission

levels more closely with resettlement country processing capacities in order to prevent an increasing backlog of cases for certain refugee populations, which was causing lengthy processing times and frustrated expectations.

6. Resettlement departures also fell sharply over the reporting period, in part due to the introduction of new security screening requirements by some resettlement countries, and also due to challenges encountered by resettlement countries in accessing populations in host countries experiencing volatile security situations. In 2010, there were 73,000 departures, representing a decline of 14 per cent from the departure level of 2009 (84,600 departures), and in 2011, departures dropped further, by 16 per cent to 61,600. Iraqi refugees were particularly affected with 8,700 departures in 2011, representing a decrease of 46 per cent from the 2010 level and 62 per cent from the 2009 level. Departures of Somali refugees also decreased, with only 30 per cent of those submitted for resettlement actually departing in the last year.

7. UNHCR stepped up its engagement with resettlement countries to address these challenges, focusing on reducing lengthy processing times, avoiding the use of discriminatory selection criteria, and overcoming the difficulties faced by some resettlement countries in accessing certain refugee populations due to safety and security concerns. As part of the overall effort to expedite the processing of individual resettlement cases, UNHCR developed an abridged Resettlement Registration Form (RRF) template for global use, which decreases the time required to prepare resettlement submissions. It also engaged in discussions with resettlement countries to explore new possibilities for improving the efficiency of the resettlement system through electronic data sharing and expedited security clearance and departure procedures, particularly for refugees who are at serious risk. UNHCR further raised concerns regarding the consideration of "integration potential" as a resettlement selection criterion, noting that protection should be the foremost consideration in resettlement selection. Finally, to address the difficulties faced by some resettlement countries in accessing refugee populations for resettlement processing, UNHCR promoted the use of video conferencing for resettlement interviews and the methodology was piloted in a number of operations.

8. On a positive note, the number of women and girls at risk who were submitted for resettlement reached for the first time the target of 10 per cent set by the Executive Committee in its Conclusion No. 105 (LVII)[1] of 2006. The number of cases of refugee women and girls at risk submitted for resettlement was 3,463 in 2011, which was the highest level ever submitted.

IV. Resettlement within emergency response mechanisms

9. The vital role resettlement can play in response to emergency refugee situations was clearly demonstrated in the context of the Libya crisis in 2011. In order to garner support for resettlement places for non-Libyan refugees fleeing Libya to Tunisia and Egypt, UNHCR mounted a major resettlement effort and launched a Global Resettlement Solidarity Initiative in April 2011, calling for additional resettlement places above the established yearly quotas and for expedited resettlement processing by resettlement States.

10. In response to the Initiative, twelve resettlement countries offered some 1,700 dedicated resettlement places,[2] and the United States of America offered an open-ended number of places. However, the overall slowness of the initial response from States and the difficulties they faced in being able to add resettlement places to their annual quotas highlighted some key weaknesses in the ability of the global resettlement programme to be mobilized as part of an emergency response system.[3] In order to create

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[1] See the following link: http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/refworld/rwmain?docid=45339d922

[2] Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain and Sweden

[3] As of mid-April 2012, a total of 5,926 refugees were submitted and 1,051 refugees had departed to resettlement countries within the framework of the Global Resettlement Solidarity Initiative.

more flexibility and increase the capacity of the resettlement system to respond to emergency situations in a timely manner, at a meeting of the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement, Working Group on Resettlement (ATCR/WGR) in 2011, UNHCR proposed piloting a pool of emergency resettlement places, to be set aside specifically for large-scale emergency resettlement on an annual basis. While some States made pledges for a dedicated number of places for the pool, the offers have so far been drawn from existing yearly quotas, with the understanding that should they not be used in an emergency context, these places would be reinserted in the regular resettlement programme to be filled in the latter part of the year. UNHCR and resettlement countries will continue to develop and evaluate the effectiveness of this pilot scheme.

11.   The resettlement response to the Libya crisis also demonstrated the value of the emergency transit facilities (ETFs) in Romania and Slovakia, to which 205 refugees were evacuated from the borders of Tunisia and Egypt. These two ETFs, together with a third one located in the Philippines, offer some 400 places for emergency relocation. They have enabled refugees to be brought to safety and facilitated the access of resettlement countries to resettlement processing facilities. Since the establishment of the ETFs in 2008/9, a total of 1,374 individuals of 15 nationalities from 18 countries of asylum have been transferred to ETFs, and 1,234 persons have departed to 11 resettlement countries. In order to improve the understanding of the procedural requirements for using the ETFs, UNHCR issued internal guidance in early 2011, and collaborated closely with countries hosting the ETFs to further strengthen coordination and support. UNHCR will continue to work with all involved actors to enhance the use of the ETFs as an important global protection mechanism.

V.   Resettlement as part of comprehensive solutions strategies and the strategic use of resettlement

12.   The resettlement community has increasingly recognized that resettlement not only performs an important protection function by offering solutions to refugees facing serious risks, but can also be used strategically to secure wider protection and solutions dividends. In this respect, resettlement can contribute to international responsibility and burden sharing *vis a vis* States hosting large numbers of refugees, paving the way for other solutions, particularly local integration, but also voluntary repatriation where appropriate.

13.   Within the framework of the ATCR, UNHCR continued to draw the attention of States to resettlement needs in priority protracted refugee situations, in line with Executive Committee Conclusion No. 109 (LX)[4] of 2009. In consultation with resettlement countries, seven situations in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America, were designated as priorities for the strategic use of resettlement. In selecting each priority situation, realistic protection and solutions results were clearly specified within the overall strategy of each concerned operation. While some protection and solutions dividends may be expected in the short-term, others may only take place over a longer period. All stakeholders were encouraged to jointly evaluate the progress made towards achieving resettlement objectives and expected protection dividends, reflecting on opportunities and challenges and strategizing on the way forward.

14.   Effective implementation of the strategic use of resettlement requires close collaboration among the network of resettlement countries. This means being able to elicit concrete support from the network, maintaining open and transparent communication between all partners, and improving coordination, including with countries of asylum. Greater effort is required on the part of resettlement countries to generate recognition within their government structures of the strategic value of resettlement, particularly its role in achieving comprehensive solutions for protracted refugee situations. The strategic use of resettlement will continue to be a key area of focus within the ATCR/WGR in close consultation with concerned host countries.

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[4]   See the following link: http://www.unhcr.org/4b332bca9.html

VI. Reception and integration of resettled refugees

15.   Resettlement is only a truly durable solution if refugees are able to integrate in their countries of resettlement. Establishing and maintaining effective programmes that support the reception and integration of resettled refugees can be a challenge for resettlement countries and partners, although there are many good practices which can serve as models. Integration requires pre-departure preparation; the active participation of refugees in all stages of the process; opportunities for language training, skills development, and employment; the support of communities in the resettlement countries, including the availability of services tailored to vulnerable groups; and the coordination and engagement of all relevant governmental authorities, particularly at the local level.

16.   Discussions in the ATCR/WGR during the reporting period emphasized strengthening cultural orientation programmes for refugees selected for resettlement; ensuring adequate reception and integration support; reinforcing the engagement of local authorities and communities; developing a welcoming, multi-cultural, and refugee-friendly environment; and establishing twinning arrangements between States with more established resettlement programmes and those with newer resettlement programmes to share experiences and build capacities.

17.   Such discussions led to the creation in 2011 of two sets of twinning partner relationships which will form the basis for ongoing supportive activities. As part of the Office's continued support for resettlement activities within the European Union, UNHCR joined forces with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) on two EU-funded projects. These projects entitled, "Practical Cooperation in EU Resettlement" and "Linking-In EU Resettlement", promote capacity building and harmonized approaches to resettlement. Plans are underway to develop an online network of resettlement actors and practitioners who can share information and good practices. In addition, UNHCR will continue to promote the development of benchmarks to measure integration outcomes for resettled refugees, and will work with local counterparts to support integration studies and data analysis. The Office will also support the organization of a "Skills Share Day" in Brussels in May 2012, which will bring together practitioners in refugee resettlement in EU member States.

VII. Resettlement management

18.   Resettlement has been further integrated into the broader protection and solutions strategies of UNHCR country offices in recognition of its crucial role as a responsibility and burden-sharing mechanism that can enhance protection space for refugees in countries of asylum and enable complementary durable solutions. Methodologies for assessing resettlement needs and capacities were improved; tools to enhance the identification of persons with resettlement needs were reinforced; and harmonized approaches to resolving complex cases were strengthened. The annual Projected Global Resettlement Needs document submitted at the yearly ATCR/WGR meeting continues to form the basis for global guidance on the establishment of resettlement countries' annual resettlement quotas and targets, and it constitutes a key document for managing the global resettlement scheme.

19.   In 2011, UNHCR issued an entirely revised Resettlement Handbook. The new Handbook provides guidance on a vast range of resettlement issues both at the policy and operational levels, and it will contribute to improved global coherence and efficiency in resettlement delivery. Nineteen resettlement countries updated their country chapters, providing detailed information on their respective resettlement and integration programmes. A series of video tutorials were also produced to complement the new contents of the Handbook. In addition, UNHCR finalized the second edition of the Heightened Risk Identification Tool (HRIT) and issued operational guidance on the resettlement of complex cases involving polygamous families, married children, and alleged perpetrators of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).

20.   The revised Resettlement Learning Programme (RLP) benefited various operations across regions and was bolstered by on-site training programmes provided by UNHCR's Resettlement Service. As part of its efforts to improve the management and integrity of the resettlement process, the Office launched in 2012 an e-learning module on, "Managing an Effective Resettlement Operation," as the first in a series. Future e-learning courses will address other elements of the resettlement process, such as the identification of needs; refugee status as a precondition for resettlement consideration; submission categories and processing; partnerships; and the role of resettlement within a broader protection and durable solutions framework. UNHCR also developed the Consolidated Online Resettlement Tracking System (CORTS), a new resettlement data management tool that allows the automated exporting of data from the *proGres* database in Field Offices to Regional Resettlement Hubs or Regional Offices.

21.   During the reporting period, UNHCR continued to strengthen its efforts to address issues of resettlement fraud, foremost by formulating a plan of action on resettlement fraud prevention and control, based on recommendations made in the audit report of the UN Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS). The Resettlement Service further deployed specialized staff to a number of field operations to augment their anti-fraud capacity and also established a mechanism for regular review of Field Office compliance with fraud prevention and control, which includes updating the Baseline Standard Operating Procedures on Resettlement. UNHCR also benefited from the expertise offered by resettlement States, such as participating in training on document fraud. A pilot initiated by the United States of America to assess the use of UNHCR's existing biometric system in US resettlement processing was carried out in Kenya.

VIII.   Coordination and partnerships

22.   The ATCR/WGR process, chaired by the United States of America in 2010-2011 and Australia in 2011-2012, continued to serve as the primary forum to foster partnerships, address critical issues, and improve the coherence, quality, and effectiveness of resettlement globally. Within the WGR framework, two thematic meetings were held: the 4th Meeting of the Expert Group on Resettlement Fraud in Washington, D.C., in September 2010 and the WGR on Integration in Melbourne in February 2012. During the reporting period, discussions in the WGR focused on collaborative efforts to increase the capacities of resettlement communities, promote the strategic use of resettlement, address case processing challenges, and improve the quality of integration outcomes for resettled refugees. The consultation process also contributed to the adoption of operational tools, such as the abridged Resettlement Registration Form (RRF) template for expedited resettlement processing.

23.   Resettlement partnerships continue to evolve among UNHCR, States, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international organizations, civil society, community-based organizations, and others. The resettlement process is increasingly interconnected, requiring seamless collaboration among partners from the identification stage, through case processing and departure, and on to reception and integration. The efficiency and effectiveness of each stage of the process has implications for successful outcomes in the other stages. To further collaboration, UNHCR and its NGO partners developed a "UNHCR-NGO Toolkit for Practical Cooperation on Resettlement", which serves as a repository of tools and practices related to resettlement processing, reception and integration. Partners such as the ICMC, RefugePoint, and the International Rescue Committee (IRC), continued to provide human resources to support UNHCR's resettlement processing capacity. Through the UNHCR-ICMC Resettlement Deployment Scheme, ICMC swiftly responded to reinforce UNHCR's emergency capacity as the crisis in Libya unfolded. IOM also continued to offer support for expeditious resettlement departures and family reunification processes. UNHCR and IOM will further enhance cooperation through the adoption of Framework Standard Operating Procedures, which will ensure a better understanding of each other's respective roles and responsibilities and address any gaps. UNHCR and the University of Geneva jointly developed an online Worldwide Community of Resettled Refugees (WCRR), an internet platform enabling

resettled refugees to form a virtual community through which they can share information and provide each other with support.

IX. Outlook

24.   Significant progress has been made on resettlement issues in recent years with the support and cooperation of resettlement States, NGOs, and other partners. Not only does resettlement play a vital role in protecting individual refugees at risk, but it also plays an important role in sharing responsibilities with host governments and strategically supporting the search for solutions for protracted refugee situations, in line with Executive Committee Conclusion N° 109.[5]

25.   Resettlement-related pledges presented by twenty-five countries at the Intergovernmental event at the ministerial level facilitated by UNHCR in December 2011 provide an encouraging outlook and demonstrate the positive and solid commitment of the international community to resettlement. A common text adopted within the ATCR/WGR process under the US leadership inspired these pledges, which included enhancing integration programmes, fostering twinning arrangements, redoubling efforts towards expeditious resettlement processes, and contributing to the flexible pool of resettlement places as part of an emergency response system.

26.   Despite this positive outlook, the following challenges warrant priority attention:

- Resettlement needs continue to far outstrip the number of resettlement places available globally, requiring a concerted effort to expand resettlement opportunities. Traditional resettlement countries may consider increasing their existing quotas; non-resettlement countries may offer to become resettlement countries; countries with ad hoc approaches may consider turning these into planned programmes; and emerging resettlement countries could further consolidate and expand their programmes.

- Resettlement processing challenges will remain an area for further engagement. There is a need to ensure that resettlement activities are organized according to global needs and priorities, and that processing approaches are flexible and speedy, taking into account the protection risks faced by refugees. Additionally, restrictive integration and other discriminatory selection criteria, which undermine the protection foundation of resettlement, should be avoided, and focus should be placed on reinforcing the integration capacity of receiving communities by fostering a receptive and welcoming environment for refugees.

- The strategic use of resettlement could be expanded as an integral part of a larger comprehensive solutions strategy. This would require identifying priority situations and using ongoing assessments and multi-year planning to set specific, realistic, and measureable goals for expanding protection space and opening doors to other solutions.

- The reception and integration of resettled refugees pose challenges to resettlement countries, local authorities, local communities, and partners. UNHCR will continue to work with all concerned partners to promote good practices, creative collaboration and the sharing of information and analyses. This complex field could benefit from further data collection and analysis, including through the identification and use of benchmarks for measuring progress and outcomes in the integration process.

- UNHCR will continue to refine and strengthen its resettlement procedures to enhance the quality and efficiency of resettlement submissions. It will further develop its methodologies for assessing global resettlement needs and will strengthen its case identification and processing skills through enhanced guidance and training. This will include guidance and training on identifying and referring

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[5] See the following link : http://www.unhcr.org/4b332bca9.html

refugees at heightened risk, ensuring procedural integrity through implementation of the Standard Operating Procedures, and preparing resettlement referrals in accordance with the standards and guidance set out in the revised Resettlement Handbook.

• UNHCR will continue to combat fraud in order to preserve the integrity of resettlement programmes. It will implement the plan of action on resettlement fraud prevention and control, in line with the recommendations of the OIOS, deploying specialized staff to provide training and enhance the anti-fraud capacity of field operations, and monitoring the compliance of field operations with anti-fraud procedures.

• Collaborative partnerships with the NGO community and with IOM are critical to the effective management of the global resettlement scheme. They are particularly important in enabling multi-year resettlement planning, which provides greater predictability and allows for the sustained and phased implementation of comprehensive solutions strategies. UNHCR will continue to maximize the use of the ATCR/WGR process to improve coordination and information sharing among stakeholders and to explore ways to resolve critical issues and to enhance the effectiveness and capacity of the global resettlement programme.

X.   Conclusion

27.   Against this background, it is clear that resettlement remains a vital tool for securing the protection of refugees, an integral element of comprehensive solutions strategies, and a tangible demonstration of international solidarity in securing solutions for a number of refugee situations. Resettlement can offer hope, restore dignity, and provide a new start in life for refugees who are at serious risk in emergency or protracted situations. UNHCR looks forward to continued close cooperation with all partners in this joint endeavour.

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