

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

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**UNHCR's Annual Consultation with NGOs
Rapporteur's Presentation to UNHCR's Executive Committee
Linda Bartolomei, Rapporteur for the Annual Consultations**

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of UNHCR's NGO partners, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to present the report on the 2011 Annual Consultations which were held in late June. As you have already received the detailed report, in this brief presentation I will only highlight the most pressing issues of concern and the main recommendations which emerged from the Consultations.

The theme of this year's consultations '60 years of partnership – the road ahead' was chosen to recognise and mark the 60th anniversary of the Refugee Convention and importantly to highlight the critical role that partnerships with NGOs, especially local civil society organisations, play in assisting UNHCR to respond to the increasingly complex protection needs of refugees and other persons of concern. This overarching theme also provided a timely opportunity to review progress, share good practices and to explore new challenges.

In his opening plenary the High Commissioner outlined many of the urgent challenges facing UNHCR and its NGO partners. He discussed the impacts of the diminishing humanitarian and asylum space, the number of new and often unexpected crises increasing both the number of those displaced and the length of time for which they are displaced. He emphasised the urgency of finding effective responses to those who are forced to move as a result of today's increasingly interlinked mega trends of population growth, urbanization, food and water insecurity and by climate change, but who are not covered by the 1951 convention. In subsequent plenary sessions and thematic panels some of the major contemporary protection problems facing displaced peoples were further explored. These included the protection needs of stateless and internally displaced peoples, urban refugees, women and girls at risk and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) asylum seekers and refugees.

A number of current regional situations in which the rights of refugees and other persons of concern remain at risk, pre-occupied many of the NGOs present. These include the planned invocation of the cessation clause for Rwandan refugees, the proposal by Australia to send asylum seekers to Malaysia, a non-signatory state, and the situation in South Kordofan and Blue Nile following South Sudan's independence. UNHCR was urged to provide regular and effective dialogue and communication regarding the cessation strategy and road map for Rwanda and to work with the UN Secretary General Special Envoy in Sudan to ensure the continued protection of civilians. In the context of the large number of protracted refugee situations across Asia, States are encouraged to make more concerted efforts towards the development of comprehensive durable solutions. The ongoing and unprecedented unrest in the MENA region was highlighted and UNHCR was urged to continue work with states in the region to sustain and enhance protection of refugees.

Refugee and IDP women who participated in the Global Dialogues spoke frankly and powerfully about the widespread rape and gender related violence that pervades their lives and urged action and an effective response from all of us. Recommendations call for properly resourced, comprehensive and holistic services for victims of rape and other forms of gender related violence in all refugee sites, and emphasise the importance of ongoing monitoring. In this regard it was proposed that a position similar to that of a Special Rapporteur be created to monitor incidents of SGBV and progress made in response and prevention. The urgent need to create real protection space for LGBTI refugees and asylum-seekers both culturally and legally in countries of asylum was recognised and UNHCR was encouraged to build the capacity of its staff to identify and respond to the particular protection needs of this group.

The importance of increased support for local and national partners was again highlighted at this year's consultations. Donor states are urged to provide secure multi-year funding and to streamline reporting procedures to ensure sustainable and effective partnerships. The importance of partnerships and the active inclusion of persons of concern by all key stakeholders was again emphasised.

This 50th anniversary of the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness also provided a platform to explore and highlight issues relating to the identification and legal protection of stateless persons. NGOs recommend that UNHCR expand its partnerships with civil society organisations working on issues of statelessness and call on all States to take further action, including through reforming nationality laws and acceding to the conventions.

The negative impacts of detention of refugees and asylum seekers were discussed and recent research highlighting good practice alternatives was showcased. States are urged to commit to exploring and implementing alternatives to detention as part of this year's pledging process at the December Ministerial meeting.

The particular needs of IDP populations were discussed and it is recommended that all donor and host governments include support for durable solutions for IDPs as part of their development objectives.

Finally, in the context of the 60th anniversary commemorations NGOs expressed their willingness to work with States and UNHCR to develop concrete pledges for the December 2011 Ministerial Meeting to be held in Geneva. We encourage States to continue to support the work of UNHCR through pledges and subsequent action to expand the protection framework for refugee, stateless and IDP populations, including to grapple with the new challenges related to displacement and climate change. The Consultations specifically called for more sustained action and commitment on the part of all stakeholders - States, UNHCR and NGOs - to seek solutions for those displaced by natural disasters and called for increased action to address the ongoing protection failures for refugee and displaced women and girls.

Mr. Chairman, the complete version of the Consultations report is in the back of the room.

Again, I thank you for the opportunity to speak here today.