

PRESIDENT
HM Queen Noor of Jordan

HONORARY PRESIDENT
Nelson Mandela

PAST PRESIDENTS
Lord Louis Mountbatten
HRH Prince Charles

Statement on the Global Compact on Refugees, Third Thematic Discussion, 18 October 2017 and Fourth Thematic Discussion, 14 November 2017

Education as a complementary pathway – the need for transnational education opportunities for young refugees

By Jens Waltermann, Executive Director, United World Colleges (UWC) International

As a global organisation providing secondary education across 160 nations and to over 10,000 adolescents of high promise and potential, United World Colleges (UWC) International welcomes and strongly supports the Global Compact on Refugees' focus on refugee education. Education is the key to both participation and successful integration in host countries. Education is also key to breaking the cycles of deprivation and violence that are often at the root of the refugee situation and to building a better future. In the words of Nelson Mandela, late Honorary President of UWC International, "Education is the most powerful weapon to change the world."

- 1) UWC International strongly supports early and comprehensive access of refugees to the national education systems of host countries on the same terms as local populations and independent of the legal status of refugee youths in the host country. We also recognise the need of many host countries with limited resources to gain international financial and capacity building support to sustain large numbers of refugees in education.
- 2) In many host countries and refugee situations supported by UNHCR and other governmental and civil society actors, a focus has rightly been put on providing basic education as well as vocational training.
We suggest that the Global Compact should also recognise the need for high quality secondary and higher education particularly for refugee youth of high promise and potential. Not only would it be a shame to lose their energy and talent, but future civic leaders and entrepreneurs will be needed to rebuild the refugees' post-conflict societies.
- 3) The available university education programmes for refugees (e.g. the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (DAFI) and World

University Service of Canada (WUSC) programmes) are an important step in addressing refugee potential and closing the very large gap left by only 1% of refugee youth gaining access to higher education.

We suggest that the Global Compact should include a focus on transnational (scholarship-based) programmes as a way to complement education offerings that may not be available in host countries and that can serve as a complementary pathway for young refugees seeking to change their own fortune and the fortune of their community.

- 4) The Global Compact importantly stresses the need to offer equal rights and opportunities as well as necessary protection to refugee women. Young women from refugee communities tend to be married early – potentially with protective intentions, but with the adverse effect of them leaving secondary education before they had a chance to realise their potential in education. This is also true for many young women with high promise and potential, who are needed as especially compassionate and engaged leaders of their communities. **We suggest that the Global Compact put particular emphasis on realizing the potential of young refugee women as future civic leaders and on providing early (scholarship) opportunities enabling them to focus on completing their secondary education and gaining access to higher education.**

- 5) Despite the need to strengthen quality secondary education for talented refugee boys and girls and educating future civic leaders among refugees (described in points 2 to 4) the public sector currently provides no significant (scholarship) funding for high quality (residential) secondary education for refugees. **We suggest that the Global Compact recognises the need for scholarship funding to be made available for high quality secondary education for refugees (through transnational, scholarship-based and residential education arrangements) and that such funding should be an area for public-private co-funding to reach critical scale.**

Refugee communities will need a new generation of civic leaders to rebuild their countries of origin in a post-conflict era. The development of refugee youth with a potential for excellence and civic leadership will be essential for reconciliation and peace building and to break the protracted cycles of violence and deprivation in the longer term.

While the complementary pathways approach suggested here may seem a very long term solution to very urgent short term challenges, we suggest that the hope that can be infused into an entire community by just a handful of scholarships available to its most promising young people, can go a long way in addressing deep desperation and a sense of “having nothing to lose” – the very sense that triggers migration to the North in ever larger numbers no matter how perilous the journey may be.

We, therefore, strongly encourage the international community to consider such complementary pathways through secondary and higher education as part of the Global Compact on Refugees.

About the United World Colleges (UWC) Refugee Initiative

The UWC Refugee Initiative aims at increasing access to secondary education for refugees by providing 100 additional scholarships per year (5% of total annual admissions into the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme) for refugee and internally displaced students to attend one of the 17 UWC schools and colleges spread across the globe in a two-year residential educational programme focusing not just on academics, but on peace building and conflict resolution, service to the community as well as engagement with global affairs and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

UNHCR and UWC signed a Cooperation Agreement aimed at providing a comprehensive framework for the safe and secure access of refugees and internally displaced persons to UWC schools and colleges. Please find more information about the UWC Refugee Initiative at www.uwc.org/uwcrefugeeinitiative.

About UWC (United World Colleges)

UWC (United World Colleges) is a global education movement with the mission to make education a force to unite people, nations and cultures for peace and a sustainable future. It comprises a network of 17 international schools and colleges on four continents, short courses and a system of volunteer-run national committees in 160 countries and territories.

UWC offers a challenging educational experience to a deliberately diverse group of students and places a high value on experiential learning, community service and outdoor activities, which complement high academic standards delivered through the IB Diploma Programme.

Today, over 10,000 students from 160 countries are studying on one of the UWC campuses. 75% of UWC students in the final two years receive a full or partial scholarship, enabling admission to a UWC school to be independent of socio-economic means. Residential students in the IB Diploma Programme are selected through the national committee of their country or territory and on the basis of demonstrated promise and potential only.

Since the foundation of the first UWC college in 1962, UWC has inspired a network of more than 60,000 alumni worldwide, who remain engaged with the UWC movement and committed to contribute to a more equitable and peaceful world.

For more information visit www.uwc.org.