

Ms. Anne C.R. Keah, Kenya

7 -9 July 2020

2. International protection

(2) Oral update on ExCom Conclusions

Thank you, Mr./Ms. Chairperson,

Good morning/good afternoon Excellencies, colleagues,

1. It is good to see you all again, in-person. My deepest sympathies to all who have lost their loved ones due to the COVID-19 pandemic and my prayers and best wishes for good health for us all.
2. I am deeply honoured to provide you with an update on this year's Executive Committee conclusions process.
3. As you may recall, the indicative multi-year workplan, adopted by the Executive Committee in 2015, has resulted in the three conclusions on international protection in 2016 and 2017:
 - International cooperation from a protection and solutions perspective (conclusion No 112) in 2016;
 - Youth (No. 113) in 2016; and
 - Machine-readable travel documents for refugees and stateless persons (No. 114) in 2017.
4. Discussions on the fourth topic, Resilience and self-reliance from a protection and solutions perspective, were deferred by the Standing Committee. In 2019, delegations agreed that the initial workplan had run its course, with three ExCom conclusions adopted out of the four topics proposed for consideration. Much had changed since the initial

workplan was adopted in 2015, not the least the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees, which was affirmed by the General Assembly in December 2018.

5. Delegations also decided to start discussions on a new indicative multi-year workplan in 2020 on the basis of a non-paper prepared by UNHCR. This paper outlined the following three topics for consideration for a workplan in 2020:
 - Mental health and psychosocial support;
 - Recognition of educational qualifications of persons of concern to UNHCR; and /or
 - Issuance by UNHCR of single-voyage travel documents.
6. This was the situation when I took up my functions as Rapporteur. My initial conversations with member States and UNHCR colleagues on how to take the process forward were interrupted by the outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic and the mitigation measures put in place here in Geneva and elsewhere.
7. I think it is evident to us all that the world has changed dramatically over the last few months. The COVID-19 pandemic, and the measures taken to curb it have had far-reaching consequences for the protection and well-being of refugees and other persons of concern to UNHCR.
8. Despite the call for a global ceasefire by the United Nations Secretary-General to join forces to fight the pandemic, war, violence and persecution have not stopped, and people continue to flee to seek safety and protection.

9. Given the unprecedented nature and magnitude of the current crisis and its impact on the most vulnerable, in protection and socioeconomic terms, I thought that it might be opportune for the Executive Committee to consider a conclusion on international protection in the context of a public health emergency.
10. We discussed this among Member State representatives at a virtual informal preparatory consultation on 28 May. While many of you agreed with the relevance of an ExCom conclusion on international protection in the context of a public health emergency, you had different views on the timing of negotiating such a conclusion. Several delegations asked whether it was perhaps too early, as the full impact of the pandemic is not yet known. Others noted the importance of not missing the opportunity to discuss and possibly adopt a multi-year work programme.
11. As you know, this year's High Commissioner's Dialogue will focus on protection challenges in pandemics. Many of you felt it would be important to hear the different views that will be expressed during the dialogue on the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on the protection and resilience of refugees and other persons of concern to UNHCR. This would be an opportunity for the Executive Committee to obtain a wide variety of views, including from civil society and other key stakeholders, on the topic, before starting negotiating a conclusion on this matter.
12. Having heard all views, and taking into account the topic of the High Commissioner's Dialogue this year, I would like to propose that we start working on a multi-year work programme for 2021-2022,

including the topic of International protection in the context of public health emergencies.

13. Unless there are any views to the contrary, I propose to start our deliberations on such a work programme in early September, with a view to concluding before the start of the 71st plenary session of the Executive Committee on 5 October 2020. I will continue to count on your cooperation as we get into the crucial phase of this important process.

14. As I conclude, Mr. /Ms. Chairperson, please allow me to convey very best wishes to the distinguished colleagues who are leaving Geneva this summer. Your wise counsel and spirit of collaboration will be greatly missed. In Kiswahili, we have proverb that says, “Mountains never meet, but people do.” I’m sure at some point in time, our paths will cross again. I wish you all the best in the next chapter of your careers and in your future endeavours.

15. I thank you all for your support and I wish you all a joyous summer.

Thank you, Mr./Ms. Chairperson.