UNHCR
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés

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**Informal Summary**
**Third High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges**
***Theme: Challenges for Persons of Concern in Urban Settings***
(8-10 December 2009)

## 1. Introduction

1. Urbanization is now recognized to be an irreversible global trend. More and more people of concern to UNHCR – refugees, returnees, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and returnees – will live in cities.[1] The third High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges was held in Geneva from 8-10 December 2009 on the theme "challenges for persons of concern in urban settings". It took the form of two interrelated events:

   - A half-day Roundtable of Mayors on the theme "humanitarian challenges in the context of urbanization" (8 December 2009). [2] It enabled Mayors from 15 cities, representatives of municipal administrations from six cities, and representatives of two networks of cities to exchange their experiences, identify specific challenges, and make suggestions on ways to address them.

   - A two-day session of inter-active discussions (9-10 December 2009), consisting of a mix of plenary sessions, small-group discussions in breakout sessions, and three side events.[3]

2. The Dialogue was neither conceived nor intended to produce negotiated or binding outcomes. In view of the richness of the discussions and the relatively unexplored nature of the topic, however, this summary seeks to consolidate the most significant findings, recommendations, examples of good practice, and

[1] There are already some five million refugees and many more millions of internally displaced persons living in urban areas. See High Commissioner's opening remarks at the Dialogue: http://www.unhcr.org/4b26060c9.html
[2] UNHCR organized the roundtable in cooperation with The Hague Process on Refugees and Migration, and the Mayor and City of Geneva. The Mayor of Geneva, Mr. Rémy Pagani, and the United Nations High Commissioner, Mr. António Guterres, co-chaired the event, which took the form of an informal *tour de table* discussion. Mayor Pagani gave a report on the roundtable during the opening session of the Dialogue and a number of mayors participated actively throughout it, including Mr. Geoffrey Majiwa, Mayor of Nairobi, who co-chaired one of four breakout session.
[3] See Annex I for an overview of the High Commissioner's Dialogue.

suggestions for future action. It should be read in conjunction with the High Commissioner's closing remarks. [4]

## 2. Roundtable of Mayors

3. This section summarizes: i) the main directions in which participants felt that cities should be heading; ii) specific challenges identified; and iii) ways to address them.

### 2.1. Main directions for cities

4. Cities are on the 'front line' of receiving and hosting refugees, IDPs and other groups of UNHCR's concern. There is a need for UNHCR and the broader humanitarian and international community to work jointly with, and in support of, local authorities, taking into due account the needs of the local population. International solidarity is essential. Responses should build on existing initiatives for disadvantaged groups and avoid preferential treatment regimes which focus only on refugees or IDPs.

5. Many view urbanization as a problem rather than an opportunity. The 'fear reflex' of many city administrations needs to be overcome. Urban policies should address the needs of the urban poor in a comprehensive way to avoid the inevitable establishment or expansion of parallel neighbourhoods and structures controlled by slums lords and criminal gangs.

6. Refugees have rights which are universal and need to be guaranteed. A number of Mayors expressed the need to promote awareness of these rights globally. Others highlighted that there can be a 'spill over effect' when one city does not live up to its responsibilities, as this merely shifts the problem elsewhere, contributes to political and social extremism, and creates rifts within local populations.

7. Many participants stressed the importance of enabling integration, highlighting that refugees are not social welfare cases. They have skills which, if managed properly, can be an asset for society as a whole. There is therefore a need to revisit assumptions underpinning current approaches to dealing with refugees in cities. It was asked, why deal with them on a transitory basis, in a spatially distinct 'context', as if they do not have the skills and capacity to survive and contribute to their host communities? Integration should ideally have a legislative underpinning, so as to harmonize treatment and avoid preferential or inequitable treatment.

8. Integration requires resources, which are most often sorely lacking. There was a call for the establishment of a fund to support local authorities in responding to the specific challenges of integration. Action on behalf of refugees and host communities should not be limited to border areas, but is also needed in capital cities and smaller towns.

[4] The High Commissioner's closing remarks available on UNHCR's website at: http://www.unhcr.org/pages/4a12a4a26.html. Excerpts relating to follow-up activities are included in Annex II.

9. There is a need for cities to open up to and embrace the diversity of their populations, consolidate democratic spaces, and nurture a sense of 'belonging' and 'urban citizenship' amongst all inhabitants. In the words of one mayor, "Plans for cities must be based on 'the right to a city'".

10. Agreeing that durable solutions are the ultimate objective for refugees, Mayors highlighted the 'interconnected nature' of the refugee experience. Since many refugees ultimately repatriate voluntarily after years in exile (the preferred durable solution), the success of return critically depends on how cities have 'managed' the period of exile.

2.2 Specific challenges

11. Some participants highlighted that refugees are a strain on overstretched national resources and a burden on host communities. They also place serious pressure on infrastructure and the environment, and give rise to law and order concerns.

12. Addressing criminal (smuggling and trafficking) networks was another concern. How can refugees access legal migration mechanisms and secure passage without having to resort to smugglers or run the risk of being subjected to trafficking?

13. Some Mayors pointed to weak infrastructure as a liability. They stressed the need to plan proactively for urban growth by investing in infrastructure, while taking into due consideration population growth and potential new arrivals.

14. Many participants highlighted the importance of expanding services that are available for local populations to refugees. It was stressed that refugees get lost in city systems if they don't have a support community. The challenge is how to engage with such complex issues in the absence of substantial and reliable resources.

15. Individual registration needs to be effective and is an important tool to address the needs of vulnerable groups, particularly women, children, and the elderly, as they present an array of specific needs and issues. For example, how to address the specific medical needs of women who have been victims of sexual abuse prior to or after arrival? How to make adequate guardianship arrangements for unaccompanied minors?

16. Xenophobia and discrimination were additional concerns. The specific role of the mass media in combating intolerance was highlighted.

2.3. Ways to address the challenges

17. To promote better reception and outreach, the following were described or suggested:

- Establishing 'Solidarity Houses', where refugees and migrants can meet members of the local administration, and receive advice and orientation on issues such as available services;
- Establishing 'Family Centres', providing comprehensive family services; and
- Establishing a 'House of Refugees', providing legal, social, and medical services to asylum-seekers and refugees.

18. To provide services and promote the sharing of experiences, participants saw value in:
    - Establishing 'urban territorial and planning centres' to bring together a range of actors and services in one location (*e.g.* legal, psychosocial, housing); and
    - Fostering and deepening interconnections between cities around the globe, to promote periodic exchanges and the sharing of best practices.

19. On employment for refugees, many saw value in:
    - Building upon civil society networks and resources: by establishing, for example, work-exchange programmes with local community groups; and
    - Creating public/private partnerships with local private-sector service-providers (e.g. with employment firms like 'Manpower' or 'Addeco').

20. To combat xenophobia and advocate for tolerance, the following measures were suggested:
    - Establishing inter-ethnic programmes to prevent xenophobia;
    - Establishing programmes to encourage tolerance, including the establishment of 'Houses of Tolerance';
    - Providing micro credit and loans to groups comprising refugees and members of the local community, to ensure that they work together and learn from each other;
    - Training teachers to address the communication needs of different nationalities;
    - Establishing 'social cohesion committees'; and
    - Designating an 'immigrant month'.

21. Creating or deepening partnerships was a cross-cutting theme. Suggestions included:
    - Establishing 'twinning programmes' between cities facing similar problems, to enable them to share experiences and good practices;
    - UNHCR partnering with and exchanging experiences with municipal administrations and platforms, such as The Hague Process for Refugees and Migration, the Cities Alliance, the Council of Europe's United Cities and Local Governments, Metropolis, etc.; and
    - Compiling an inventory of good practices which could then be adapted and tailored to specific contexts. UNHCR undertook to compile such an inventory.

## 3. Plenary and working group discussions[5]

22. The Dialogue comprised a mix of plenary sessions, smaller working group discussions in breakout sessions, and side events intended to bring additional perspectives to the table, including those of populations of UNHCR's concern. Participants in all four breakout sessions considered the following themes and a number of questions underlying each[6]:
    - Identifying populations of concern in urban settings and responding to vulnerabilities and risks;
    - Securing or enlarging 'protection space' in urban settings;
    - Strengthening livelihoods, access to education and self-reliance; and
    - Addressing challenges for municipalities and authorities.

23. Participants were also invited to consider a number of cross-cutting themes, i.e. diversity and vulnerability in urban settings; protecting and assisting women and children[7]; international solidarity and burden sharing; international support for grass-roots initiatives; engaging with local communities; and innovative partnerships. A fifth theme was suggested during the Dialogue itself: resources.

24. There was broad agreement that, to address situations of urban displacement, it is necessary to have a better understanding of urban areas, their specific dynamics and the opportunities they provide. It is also necessary to review the legal and policy framework (including encampment policies) to assess the extent to which this affects whether asylum-seekers and refugees come forward to be identified, registered and documented. Legislative and policy reforms may therefore be needed to recognize that cities are places where asylum can safely be achieved. In addition, making refugee camps and settlements safe, and promoting the enjoyment of rights therein, will reduce pressure to move to urban areas. It was also recognized that international NGOs will need to reassess their roles in urban settings; to act as 'connectors, facilitators and conveners', rather than 'do-ers'.

The IDP dimension

25. While most of the discussion during the Dialogue centred upon refugees and the implementation of UNHCR's new urban refugee policy[8], the IDP dimension of urban displacement was not neglected. Wherever possible, IDP issues are addressed systematically within each focus area of this report. The

[5] The High Commissioner is grateful to HE Mr. Faisal Mekdad, Deputy Foreign Minister of the Syrian Arab Republic, for delivering the keynote statement in plenary, and to HE Luiz Paulo Teles Ferreira Barreto, Minister of Justice of Brazil, Mr. Walter Kälin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons, Mr. Geoffrey Majiwa, Mayor of Nairobi, and Mr. Dale Buscher, Director of Protection for the Women's Refugee Commission, for having co-chaired the breakout sessions and reported to plenary on their findings and recommendations.

[6] See Annex III for the specific questions considered by the participants under each theme.

[7] UNHCR is grateful for the substantive contribution provided by Dr. Eileen Pittaway of the University of New South Wales and by the Women's Refugee Commission.

[8] *UNHCR Policy on Refugee Protection and Durable Solutions in Urban Areas*, UNHCR, September 2009.

following paragraphs summarize some broader considerations regarding IDPs that were highlighted during the Dialogue.

26. Despite many similarities in the situations faced by urban refugees and urban IDPs, there are important differences, many of which flow from the fact that IDPs remain within their own country and are in effect entitled to all rights available to the population in general. Situations of IDPs in urban settings are particularly diverse, but at least four displacement scenarios were identified: i. Rural to urban; ii. Inter-urban; iii. Intra-urban; and iv. Multiple or repeated.

27. Some urban IDPs are invisible, *inter alia* because they stay with host families or mix with the general population. But they can also be living in clearly identifiable settlements, public buildings, and collective shelters or even in camps. Vulnerabilities and protection challenges will vary, requiring differentiated, operational responses.

28. To properly respond to the vulnerabilities and risks faced by urban IDPs, it is necessary to develop – at the national and local levels – legal frameworks, policies and strategies encompassing and specifically addressing urban contexts. Other findings and recommendations relating to IDPs are set out below under each theme.

### 3.1 Theme One: Identifying populations of concern in urban settings and responding to vulnerabilities and risks

3.1.1. Specific challenges for refugees and others of concern

29. To develop appropriate responses, it is necessary to understand the overall magnitude of the refugee or IDP phenomenon, including their locations, specific needs and vulnerabilities. An important challenge is that persons of concern, especially asylum-seekers and refugees, may be reluctant to be identified and instead prefer to remain 'invisible' for a range of reasons, including:
    - Fear of detention/deportation by the local authorities;
    - Fear of discrimination or mistreatment by the local host community as a result, for example, of racism and/or xenophobia;
    - The perception that there are no 'advantages' to being registered;
    - Legal frameworks that blur the distinction between 'refugee' and 'migrant' and operate to deny important rights; and
    - Inconsistent interpretation and application of the 1951 Refugee Convention.

30. This makes it more difficult to identify persons with specific needs and especially vulnerable groups, such as women and unaccompanied children, who may resort to forced marriage, survival sex, or child labour as coping mechanisms. Undocumented urban refugees are generally more exposed to the risks of prostitution, trafficking, exploitation in the informal labour market, detention and deportation.

3.1.2 Ways to address the challenges

31. It is necessary to acknowledge and address the heightened vulnerability of women and children in displacement (be they refugee or IDPs), giving appropriate attention to this throughout assessment and response, as well as in achieving durable solutions. Suggestions included:
    - Adopting a gender lens and a child protection lens when identifying protection challenges and responses;
    - Raising awareness amongst all actors working with these groups of issues such as survival sex, prostitution, forced marriages, child labour and gender-based violence;
    - Creating designated Child Protection Officers within immigration departments to tackle the issue of unaccompanied minors; and
    - Setting in place measures to encourage victims of trafficking or gender-based violence to seek justice and redress, for example, by allaying fears of removal from the host country in the case of refugees (or that of family members).

32. Comprehensive registration processes are an excellent means to identify persons with specific needs, and provide referrals for appropriate interventions. Many refugees currently do not come forward to register because they do not perceive any benefits if they do so. Giving meaning and recognition to registration and documentation will encourage people to actively seek it out. Suggestions for action included:
    - Setting in place a simple, clear and transparent mechanism for registration of refugees/asylum-seekers, with a defined purpose, and which provides documentation that is widely recognized. In this regard, it is vital that issues of confidentiality and data protection are respected. ('Profiling' may be an appropriate alternative, especially for IDPs.);
    - Making registration more accessible, for example, through mobile registration teams**,** so that no one is compelled to move to urban areas in order to register;
    - Using local community and faith-based organizations to facilitate the identification and registration process, and to locate refugees through outreach to their communities; and
    - Examining data that will be collected in countries with census initiatives in 2010, to identify statistics and demographics regarding persons of concern. (*e.g.* assess whether refugees are being considered within other legal categories, such as migrant or student visas, and explore opportunities under these alternative statuses.)

33. Certain groups, such as IDPs living outside of camps, may be living with host families. They need to be considered and greater efforts must be made to reach such persons, including through development interventions. Securing information on IDPs does not necessarily require individual registration which, in some instances, can even create protection risks. IDPs with special needs may also choose to identify themselves, in particular if they can turn to specialized institutions and services for assistance and support. In other instances however, registration for specific purposes, (*e.g.* access to camps and collective shelters, and identification of beneficiaries for targeted interventions) may be useful. Suggestions in this area included:

- Applying different age, gender and diversity-sensitive methods that have been developed for 'profiling' groups;
- Building the capacities of authorities at all levels to use such methods and to base their activities on the data collected; and
- Giving priority to ensuring data protection, when individual registration is undertaken.

34. In urban settings, it is often appropriate for humanitarian actors to support the host community together with the identified individual IDPs. Holistic approaches containing the following elements should be considered for IDPs:
    - Supporting IDPs as well as host communities or communities having to integrate/re-integrate IDPs (adopting the concept of *displacement-affected communities*);
    - Combining development interventions (*e.g.* repairing and/or expanding water supply systems) and traditional humanitarian activities (*e.g.* trucking of water). Such interventions may be easier to implement in urban settings, reaching a bigger number of beneficiaries (displaced and local population), and may be less costly in the long run; and
    - Strengthening the capacity of service providers to respond to additional burdens created by the influx of more people into communities (*e.g.* food support to teachers ready to accept IDP children in their classrooms).

35. Community outreach efforts are also essential for both refugees and IDPs. Suggestions here included:
    - Multiplying methods to reach out to and identify persons with vulnerabilities, including through family visits (which can provide referrals to similar families that have previously gone unidentified); as well as programmes providing individual legal/social services counselling;[9]
    - Engaging independent/neutral actors for outreach, using known/respected community members or engaging informal pre-existing protection networks (e.g. programmes for battered women or for street children); and
    - Using a participatory approach to identify populations of concern in urban settings and respond to vulnerabilities and risks.

36. Empowering communities was deemed essential by, for example:
    - Disseminating information on rights and obligations;
    - Promoting the selection of community leaders (male and female); and
    - Encouraging refugee or IDP representation in local school and social service committees.

37. The importance of developing new forms of cooperation was repeatedly stressed. Humanitarian actors, including UNHCR, need to strengthen their capacities and expertise, and better coordinate with development actors at the operational level. Suggestions included:

[9] In the Middle East, UNHCR has used a number of outreach techniques, including female community outreach volunteers, drawn from vulnerable members of the refugee community; mobile phone text messaging; internet; interviews on occasions when refugees come into contact with UNHCR for a range of reasons; and periodic surveys on services, which also help to identify protection issues and trends.

- Working more closely with host-community groups (including local faith-based groups) as well as refugees/asylum-seekers and IDP groups, as they know well who is in area and who are the most vulnerable;
- Partnering with Mayors, local-level departments of education, and local officials, rather than solely engaging with Ministries of Education and other national level authorities;
- Bringing the work of humanitarian IGOs and NGOs closer to the work of development and health actors, such as the International Planned Parenthood Foundation (IPPF); and
- Effectively mapping the locations of urban displaced and refugees.

38. Training local authorities, law enforcement officials, immigration officials, etc., is an important means to better inform them regarding the rights of persons of concern (whether refugees, asylum-seekers or IDPs), including the commitments that may have been made at a national level. This point was also stressed in relation to theme two, on securing or enlarging 'protection space' in cities and urban settings, which is discussed below.

39. Ensuring effective access to HIV care and therapies, regardless of legal status.

## 3.2 Theme 2: Securing or enlarging 'protection space' in cities and urban settings

### 3.2.1 Specific challenges for refugees and others of concern

40. Many persons of concern are unaware of their rights. Communication and access to information are therefore significant challenges pertaining to protection space. Another is the phenomenon of mixed migratory flows, which makes it difficult to distinguish between refugees and migrants. Detention was seen as a key problem facing many urban refugees, especially when this results in family separation. Additional challenges relate to the fact that legislative frameworks and procedures may not adequately address issues of refugees and others of concern to UNHCR. For authorities and service providers, a shared challenge is how to access and provide services to persons dispersed throughout a city or cities. Furthermore, xenophobia**,** including mob violence, threatens persons of concern with physical harm and also limits their mobility, thus constraining their access to social services.

41. People displaced internally from rural to urban areas often can lack the "street smarts" to survive in a city. The existence of family ties, family unity and the support of non-displaced family members can be important factors in mitigating the emergence and increase of the vulnerability of IDPs. Urban IDPs – more so than in rural locations – face the following problems:
    - Increased obstacles to access services, or risk of harassment by law and order authorities, due to lack of documentation;
    - Lack of appropriate shelter;
    - Lack of security of tenure to property, resulting in the risk of eviction; and
    - Increased vulnerability to financial and sexual exploitation, including trafficking of girls and women.

3.2.2 Ways to address the challenges

42. To ensure that 'protection space' is indeed available and enjoyed in cities, the following suggestions were made:
    - Enacting domestic legislation to ensure that rights are properly accorded to refugees and that the legal system does not punish claimants;
    - Using the court system to establish legal precedents that help to establish positive standards;
    - Concerted advocacy by UNHCR and NGO partners with host governments to ease restrictions on refugee rights, such as freedom of movement and the right to work;
    - Comprehensively examining any restrictions to freedom of movement, in whatever guise, and advocating for appropriate legislative reform; and
    - Allocating resources to reduce backlogs in refugee status determination (RSD) mechanisms (including when UNHCR is carrying out RSD).

43. Avoiding the creation or perpetuation of parallel structures for service-delivery was deemed essential. Suggestions to achieve this goal included:
    - Enhancing local infrastructure, so that refugees can have access to existing services, including schools and hospitals;
    - Promoting greater cooperation between social services and local authorities (this being an area where municipalities could play a strong role);
    - Making humanitarian and development programming more cohesive so that local populations can benefit and see the added value of having a refugee presence; and
    - Improving the protection infrastructure of host countries through an integrated, participatory approach.

44. To enable access to assistance and services, the following were suggested:
    - Carrying out a mapping exercise to ascertain which services are already available in the location;
    - Advocating, by UNHCR and other players, to encourage giving refugees access to these services;
    - Providing international financial and institutional support to fill in gaps, and augment the capacities of national institutions as well as the services on offer;
    - Targeting the most vulnerable groups (preferably on the basis of agreed 'vulnerability criteria');
    - Supporting incremental housing improvements/solutions;
    - Providing skills training and micro-credit finance schemes to help refugees integrate in their host countries (and to re-integrate following voluntary repatriation);
    - Utilizing new technologies such as email, text messages, and websites to disseminate information to refugees on their rights and services available;
    - Creating a community facility or support centre (or a such of such centres), providing a space where persons can come together and support one another; and

- Exploring 'area-based programming for protection' since refugees and asylum-seekers end up within a larger community (*e.g.* the urban poor).

45. Regarding detention, the following was suggested:
    - Encouraging alternatives to detention;
    - Giving UNHCR access to detention centres, in order to undertake monitoring and interventions; and
    - Training local authorities, police forces and law enforcement agencies to raise awareness about refugee-specific issues and rights.

46. To inform refugees and other persons of concern of their rights and the procedures surrounding RSD, the following suggestions were made:
    - Harnessing the media to promote a positive image of refugees;
    - Undertaking information campaigns, including with media involvement;
    - Publishing leaflets and organizing counselling sessions to engage more directly with urban refugees;
    - Carrying out research to show the positive economic, social and cultural contributions made by urban refugees to socio-economic development; and
    - Acknowledging and reinforcing the duties of refugees and asylum-seekers, including *vis-à-vis* host states and host communities.

47. To address concerns regarding xenophobia, racism and other forms of discrimination, participants suggested the following:
    - Identifying localities in urban areas that have a higher frequency of mob attacks and targeting these locations to spread tolerance messages, including through local and religious leaders;
    - Creating "Diversity Initiatives" that monitor xenophobic incidents and encouraging law enforcement agencies to respond appropriately;
    - Working with local police to establish community policing points to improve communication between the community and the police;
    - Establishing systematic responses (*e.g.* a 'Ten Point Plan for Combating Xenophobia' or similar action plans), including legislative reform to criminalize hate crimes;
    - Engaging local community leaders to help reduce xenophobic attacks and make it safer for refugees to approach humanitarian actors;
    - Providing support to social cohesion discussions in polarized communities, to identify problems such as misinformation in order to reduce the impact of these problems;
    - Creating sports programmes that bring together members of host community and refugees; and
    - Sharing good practices by cities in combating xenophobia.

48. Responding to the protection needs of IDPs is the responsibility of national and local authorities, but international organizations play an important complementary role, in particular where authorities are unable or unwilling to appropriately respond to protection needs. Suggestions to address the situation of IDPs included:
    - Integrating IDPs into local organizations and institutions (*e.g.* school boards and other community-based initiatives) in order to guarantee their

participation in matters affecting them, and as a means to reduce their isolation, marginalization or discrimination.

- Augmenting capacity (both international and local) to address land and property issues and recognizing the need for pragmatic solutions (*e.g.* such as granting security of tenure or guaranteeing the right to remain on public land).

### 3.3 Theme 3: Livelihoods, access to education and self-reliance

#### 3.3.1 Specific challenges for refugees and others of concern

49. The situation of refugees and IDPs is different when it comes to access to livelihoods since the State should not impose limitations on the right to work for IDPs. Refugees most often identify the right to work as the single most important element of self-reliance. Livelihoods were described as bringing fresh sets of protection challenges. Prohibiting refugees from working does not prevent it, but forces them into the informal labour sector, heightening the risk of exploitation of women, men, girls and boys. This raises an important dilemma. How can UNHCR and partners assist in securing access to the labour market when there is no right to work? The aim is not to contribute to the rapid expansion of the informal economy but rather to understand and hopefully lift barriers to accessing the formal economy. In this regard, it is important to have a range of interventions to address the diversity of the population.

#### 3.3.2 Ways to address the challenges

50. NGOs should adopt new programme models. This includes:
    - Recognizing that NGOs cannot 'be' the solution in cities but should instead connect people to solutions; and
    - International NGOs boosting local NGO and institutional capacity.

51. Legal protection can assist refugees to find livelihoods and become more self-reliant. Suggestions here included:
    - UNHCR playing a strong advocacy role, particularly in regions where the right to work is heavily restricted. This includes sensitizing policy-makers to the risks of pushing refugees exclusively into informal employment;
    - Reforming restrictive legislation in order to ensure the right to work and to own small business;
    - Researching and documenting refugees' contributions to local economies; and
    - Regularizing migration as a means to discourage refugees and other persons of concern from working in the informal sectors of the economy and add value to the local economy through increased tax revenue.

52. Regarding access to livelihoods and self-reliance, the following were recommended:
    - Where refugees do have the right to work, introducing new approaches towards advocacy, including through strategic litigation as well as individual legal counselling regarding labour laws for persons of concern;

- Focusing advocacy efforts further on the conditions of labour, including labour regulation;
- Exploring and creating links to national poverty reduction plans and strategies;
- Given the diversity of the population, adopting a range of interventions to ensure that programmes are coherent with the socio-economic context of the situation, including an assessment and matching of the skills that are needed; and
- Setting up more intensive programmes to engage with youth, in order to alleviate boredom or desperation.

53. Regarding training and capacity-building for livelihoods, the following suggestions were made:
    - Training refugees so they can adapt to urban settings as well as life in a new country;[10]
    - Basing skills training on market opportunities, with preference given to apprenticeship schemes linked to job placement over classroom work, as well as life skills and financial literacy;
    - UNHCR partnering with local actors to understand the opportunities and niches offered by local labour markets;
    - Providing skills training via partnerships with national vocational training institutes, so that skills can be certified, thereby enabling refugees to market them in the host country as well as in the country of origin;
    - Devoting a portion of skills training programmes to vulnerable host-community members, with encouragement to create mixed groups for small-business creation upon completion of training;
    - Avoiding "make-work" initiatives which operate in isolation from local realities;
    - Devoting more attention to post-primary education**,** given that skills training may make this a prerequisite; and
    - Exploring innovative approaches to expand access to education (*e.g.* distance-learning and on-line tertiary education).

54. In the case of IDPs, suggestions included:
    - Viewing livelihood interventions not just as a means to address immediate humanitarian needs, but also to avoid people being forced into criminal activities, such as prostitution, in order to survive;
    - Improving coordination among the various stakeholders: authorities, local NGOs, private sector, representative bodies of IDPs, local businesses and others, as well as between humanitarian and development actors and donors;
    - Providing individual support to deal with administrative requirements;
    - Ensuring that livelihood interventions: build on the existing capacities of individuals; promote types of livelihoods that correspond to market needs;

[10] There are examples of good practice in respect of resettled refugees, including providing vocational training, language classes, as well as orientation from local police officers – thus making refugees aware of their responsibilities under local law and helping them to avoid becoming crime victims or perpetrators.

are provided consistently throughout the life span of a displacement situation, to ensure sustainability; remove obstacles to micro-credits, bank credits and other economic incentives; and take into account the close relationship between access to adequate housing and livelihood opportunities;

- Including IDPs as an explicit category of beneficiaries in general poverty alleviation measures and similar social programmes; and
- Where return is not a realistic option, enabling local integration as a key solution to the plight of many IDPs. Where return has occurred to the same community, support should not be limited to returnees but also provided to those who integrate locally.

## 3.4 Theme 4: Challenges for municipalities and authorities[11]

### 3.4.1 Specific challenges

55. Although national authorities establish refugee policy, municipalities and the local host community most often bear the burden of funding and providing essential services, such as shelter, education and health care. Urban and municipal authorities may have little experience in working with populations of concern to UNHCR. Raising awareness, for example, of refugee issues – and helping citizens to understand the reasons why refugees had to leave their homes in the first place – is a challenge. It is also difficult to synchronize local stakeholders, including the police force and social services.

56. When it comes to internal displacement, the local authorities are at the end of the response chain, but have the most impact on IDPs since they are the 'providers of first instance'. Urban authorities need support to alert national authorities about the need to respond to an IDP situation or to raise concerns with national authorities aimed at improving protection and assistance to IDPs. At the same time, it is important to sensitize urban authorities to the rights and needs of the displaced, as well as to the opportunities their arrival may provide.

### 3.4.2. Ways to address the challenges

57. To foster a favourable environment for refugee protection and assistance, participants suggested the following:
    - UNHCR and other actors recognizing the pivotal role of municipalities and developing new relationships and partnerships with cities. They are, in effect, at the interface between government and citizens[12];
    - Mayors and other community leaders speaking positively of the economic, cultural and social contributions which refugees can make; and
    - Municipal authorities spurring awareness at national level of the challenges being faced at local level.

[11] See Section 2 for recommendations made during the Roundtable of Mayors on 8 December 2009.
[12] This recognition is inherent in one regional framework, the November 2004 *Mexico Declaration and Plan of Action*, which includes a "Solidarity Cities" component.

58. To address the challenges relating to funding/providing essential services (such as shelter, education and health care) the following measures were recommended:
    - Increasing donor funding for programmes targeting refugees in urban environments;
    - Re-conceptualising "burden-sharing" as "opportunity-sharing";
    - Creating "Local Trustee" councils in communities, involving, for example, school directors, local municipal officials, health services, in order to formulate local action plans;
    - Enlisting the support of local and international industry;
    - Giving early attention to, and improving conditions for, voluntary return and sustainable reintegration by:
        - ✓ Ensuring the recognition of skills certificates by the country of origin;
        - ✓ Securing effective engagement /support by embassy officials of the country of origin;
        - ✓ Using UNHCR's 'Heightened Risk Identification Tool' to find individuals who may not be able to return; and
        - ✓ Ensuring that effective housing, land and property restitution mechanisms are in place, including through bilateral advocacy with the country of origin.

59. To build the capacity of municipalities and local authorities, the participants suggested the following measures:
    - Collecting and disseminating good practices of working with persons of concern in urban environments;
    - Exploring incentives for cities that have developed good practices (*e.g.* annual awards or other types of recognition);
    - Improving coordination amongst stakeholders, especially service providers in municipalities. To this end, promoting a harmonized understanding of significant concepts (especially the term "refugee");
    - Identifying new partnerships (e.g. The Hague Process on Refugees and Migration, Cities Alliance, World Economic Forum, Soros Foundation) to empower cities;
    - Establishing a more structured engagement between UNHCR and Mayors/municipal authorities, to ensure continued attention to persons of concern;
    - Engaging with working level officials for training regarding rights and duties;
    - UNHCR and partners developing a more concrete roadmap for work with Mayors setting out specific goals and outputs; and
    - Ensuring appropriate attention to the security of those who work with persons of concern.

60. To enable local authorities to assume their responsibilities *vis-à-vis* IDPs, the following was suggested:
    - Establishing a clear allocation of powers and responsibilities between the national and urban levels regarding the displaced; and

- Providing additional resources in the case of mass influx, to be provided at the national level as well as by the international community.

## 3.5 Theme 5: Resources

### 3.5.1 Specific challenges

61. Challenges relating to resources centred on securing new and innovative sources of funding, including by refugee and migrant populations themselves, and applying resources as efficiently as possible.

### 3.5.2 Ways to address the challenges

62. Suggestions relating to resources included:
    - Engaging with the private sector, not only as a source of funding, but also as a tool for creating more protection space in the community through awareness-raising;
    - Creating public-private joint-venture partnerships (*e.g.* in Bangladesh, where seed and micro-funding initiatives are being implemented);
    - Recognizing that refugees and others of concern are themselves resources and can contribute to the local economy (*e.g.* Canada's fast-tracking the identification of skills to enable refugees to get into the job market quickly was cited as a good practice example);
    - Using UNHCR's Global Needs Assessment as a way forward to structure budgets and facilitate the efficient use of resources; and
    - Establishing closer partnership with development actors and the United Nations Country Teams to augment resources for initiatives benefiting persons of concern.

* * * * *

## Annex I

<table>
<tr><th colspan="6">UNHCR Dialogue on Protection Challenges: “Persons of Concern In Urban Settings”</th></tr>
<tr><th>Tuesday, 8 December 2009</th><th colspan="3">Wednesday, 9 December 2009</th><th colspan="2">Thursday, 10 December 2009</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">9 a.m.<br><br>Collect badges/Register<br>Pregny Gate<br>Palais des Nations</td><td colspan="3"></td><td colspan="2">9 a.m. to 10 a.m.<br>Side Event: NGO Perspectives, Room XXVI</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">10 a.m. to 1 p.m.<br><br>Opening<br>Launch of the Dialogue<br><br>Palais des Nations<br>Room XIX</td><td colspan="2">10 a.m. to 1 p.m. The Dialogue: Breakout Sessions<br>
<table>
<tr><td>Session 1<br>Room: XXVI<br>Interpret: Arabic/ Eng/Fre<br><br>Co-Chairs: RSG Walter Kälin/AHC J. Lim DIPS</td><td>Session 2<br>Room: XXVII<br>Interpret: Eng/Fre/Russ<br><br>Co-Chairs: D. Buscher/V. Cochetel DIPS</td><td>Session 3<br>Room: VIII<br>Interpret: Arabic/Eng/Fre<br><br>Co-Chairs: Mr. G. Majiwa, Mayor of Nairobi/AHC Erika Feller DIPS</td><td>Session 4<br>Room: XI<br>Interpret: Eng/ Fre/Spa<br>Co-Chairs: HE L.P. Teles Ferreira Barreto (Bra)/V. Turk DIPS</td></tr>
</table></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">1:15 p.m. to 3 p.m.<br>Side Event<br>“Voices from Cities” *<br>Interpret: Arabic/Eng/Fre/Spa/ Russ<br>Palais des Nations<br>Room XXVI<br>* Refreshments provided</td><td colspan="2">1:15 p.m. to 3 p.m.<br>Side Event<br>UNHCR’s Policy on Rrefugee Protection and Solutions in Urban Areas*<br>Interpret: Arabic/Eng/Fre/Spa/ Russ<br>Palais des Nations<br>Room XXVI<br>* Refreshments provided</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">3 p.m. to 6 p.m.<br>Roundtable of Mayors* “Humanitarian Challenges in the Context of Urbanization”<br>Palais des Nations<br>Room XXVII<br>Interpret: A, E, F, R, S<br><br>* In camera -By invitation only</td><td colspan="3">3 p.m. to 6 p.m. The Dialogue: Breakout Sessions<br>
<table>
<tr><td>Session 1<br>Room: XXVI<br>Interpret: Arabic/ Eng/Fre<br><br>Co-Chairs: RSG Walter Kälin/AHC J. Lim DIPS</td><td>Session 2<br>Room: XXVII<br>Interpret: Eng/Fre/Russ<br><br>Co-Chairs: D. Buscher/V. Cochetel DIPS</td><td>Session 3<br>Room: VIII<br>Interpret: Arabic/Eng/Fre<br><br>Co-Chairs: Mr. G. Majiwa, Mayor of Nairobi/AHC Erika Feller</td><td>Session 4<br>Room: XI<br>Interpret: Eng/ Fre/Spa<br>Co-Chairs: HE L.P. Teles Ferreira Barreto, Dep Min Justice Brazil/V. Turk DIPS</td></tr>
</table></td><td colspan="2">3 p.m. to 6 p.m.<br><br>Reports of Sessions by Co-Chair<br>Dialogue Continues<br>Chairman’s Summary<br>Close<br><br>Palais des Nations<br>Room XIX</td></tr>
<tr><td>6 p.m. to 8 p.m.<br>Reception hosted by the City of Geneva*<br>Palais Eynard<br><br>* By invitation only. Transportation provided.</td><td colspan="3">6 p.m. to 8 p.m.<br>Reception hosted by the<br>UN High Commissioner for Refugees<br>For the Dialogue - including the launch of a Photo Exhibit by<br>Mr. Zalmaï Azad<br>Mezzanine, Palais des Nations</td><td colspan="2"></td></tr>
</table>

## Annex II

### Follow-up: Excerpts from the High Commissioner's Summing Up

Turning now to follow-up, I would propose a number of things. First, we will revisit the new urban refugee policy to take into account the richness of the debate at this Dialogue and to make without delay any needed adjustments.

Second, I would suggest that Walter Kälin and I undertake advocacy together in the broader humanitarian community for a similar definition of policy for urban-based internally displaced persons. This needs to be a cooperative UN effort – UNHCR has no mandate to elaborate a policy on its own.

Third, in terms of implementation of the new policy, we have already done an evaluation of UNHCR's activities on behalf of Iraqis in the Middle East, with particular emphasis on Amman, Aleppo, Beirut and Damascus. It is impossible to say too often how generous Syria and Jordan have been. For 2010, several of our offices have already budgeted enhancements of efforts on behalf of refugees in urban settings. We will select a number of these cities as pilot sites and through the Policy Development and Evaluation Service conduct real-time evaluations of these programmes.

Fourth, we will together with our partners compile an inventory of good practices. I would emphasize that this is not something we can do alone and which depends on the networks and support of our partners.

Fifth, based on the consolidated report of the Dialogue and the pilots and the good practice inventory just mentioned, we will mainstream the new urban refugee policy into our 2011 programme. This will take some time, I appreciate. We will begin implementing the policy fully in 2011, aiming to improve our performance in 2012. We will continue the real time evaluations as appropriate to promote ongoing refinement and consolidation. Our approach will be incremental, with detailed Operational Guidance issued on aspects of the new policy as experience and resources permit.[13] At the same time we will work with other actors to see how similar efforts can be undertaken for projects relating to internally displaced people.

For all of these things, there is a question of capacity and resources. In terms of capacity, I have asked the Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, Ms. Erika Feller, to work together with the Division of International Protection Services[14], to prepare an action plan to strengthen UNHCR's protection capacity. This initiative will address gaps other than refugees in urban settings but this population is probably the one most central to the exercise. In parallel, we will work with partners to see how to develop common activities to strengthen protection capacity with them. And we will do similarly with local actors, with an emphasis on capacity-building.

In terms of resources, there is an internal dimension, essentially a question of our own prioritization, and an external dimension, primarily in respect of donors' willingness

[13] This clarification was provided by the Director of the Division of International Protection Services in response to a question from the floor, following the conclusion of the High Commissioner's remarks.
[14] Re-named the Division of International Protection (DIP) in January 2010.

to give this initiative special attention. Many of the projects will be community development ones targeted and managed not by humanitarian support but development mechanisms to provide support at local level. I would strongly urge donor countries to examine the challenge of displaced populations in urban settings with this comprehensive approach, not just a protection and assistance approach.

With respect to partnership with local authorities, as discussed at the Roundtable of Mayors (on 8 December 2009), I do not believe any new body is needed. The processes and networks already exist – the Hague Process on Refugees and Migration, Cities Alliance and others – and we need to more strongly associate ourselves with them to network with local authorities, exchanging information on good practice and seeking their support for our activities and policy development. By way of continuing the momentum achieved in the Dialogue and UNHCR's collaboration with these fora, thought could be given to a series of regional seminars focused on specific thematic and regional issues[15], as was done following the Dialogue on asylum and migration in 2007.

[15] This recommendation was made in response to an intervention from the floor, following the conclusion of the High Commissioner's remarks.

**Annex III**

**Themes for the breakout sessions**

All breakout sessions centred their deliberations on the same following broad themes:

- Identifying populations of concern in urban settings and responding to vulnerabilities and risks
- Securing or enlarging 'protection space' in urban settings
- Livelihoods, access to education and self-reliance
- Challenges for municipalities and authorities

Participants were invited to consider a number of cross-cutting themes, i.e. diversity and vulnerability in urban settings; international solidarity and burden sharing; international support for grass-roots initiatives; engaging with local communities; and innovative partnerships.

Under each theme, the Secretariat encouraged participants to focus on the following questions:

1. **Identifying populations of concern in urban settings and responding to vulnerabilities and risks**

- What practices have proved effective in addressing diversity and vulnerability in urban settings?

- While international solidarity and burden-sharing are key ingredients of a more effective response, how can international support be enlisted for grass roots, bottom-up initiatives?

- Which techniques have proved effective for engaging with local communities?

- How can populations of concern in urban settings be considered in disaster risk reduction strategies?

- What innovative techniques could be used to identify and profile individuals, families and communities in cities?

- Can innovative techniques, such as telephone messaging, internet and surveys used to reach out to Iraqi refugees, be employed in other urban settings? What additional techniques can be used?

- What insights and lessons can be drawn regarding registration and documentation of populations of concern to UNHCR in urban settings?

2. **Securing or enlarging "protection space" in urban settings**

- What techniques have proved effective to secure the enjoyment of fundamental rights?

- How can the specific protection needs of women and children be met?

- How can access to assistance and services be promoted effectively?

- What techniques can be used to foster a positive environment?

- How can humanitarian partners collaborate to combat predatory/discriminatory practices in employment, housing, and day-to-day treatment?

- What measures have proved effective in combatting arbitrary detention?

- How can persons of concern secure access to administrative support/justice?

**3. Livelihoods, access to education and self-reliance**

- How can humanitarian actors build the income-generating capacity of persons of concern and enhance their skills while promoting greater resilience?

- What are the links between initiatives to support livelihoods/self-reliance, basic services and durable solutions, and how do we reinforce those links?

- How can States ensure greater self-reliance in a manner compatible with their legal frameworks and in harmony with the needs of the local population?

**4. Challenges for municipalities and authorities**

- How can mayors and local authorities better engage with humanitarian actors and the urban displaced on issues affecting urban planning?

- As cities increasingly become theatres for humanitarian emergencies, how can the links between mayors and municipal authorities and humanitarian organizations be strengthened?

- How can associations of towns and cities be sensitized to take up displacement related issues in their own forums?

- What examples are there of innovative partnerships in cities and urban settings of responding to influxes of refugees/internally displaced persons in the short, medium and/longer terms?

- What are the essential elements of an urban policy that integrates slum-dwellers and refugees/internally displaced persons alike?