

**54th Meeting of the Standing Committee of the Executive Committee of the High
Commissioner's Programme
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Agenda item 3: Progress Report on Resettlement

**Introductory Statement by
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Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

This is the biennial report on resettlement, and you have before you document EC/63/SC/CRP.12. The updates over the two year period since the report of 2010 are provided in that the document, so I will not repeat the information provided. I would limit my intervention to key areas of the Report to highlight significant trends and developments as well as key challenges.

Mr. Chairman

Overall, the past two years have witnessed significant progress in resettlement on several fronts, but the period has also experienced some difficult challenges which have hampered the global resettlement scheme from operating as smoothly as one would have liked.

First, as regards Global Resettlement Capacity

During the last two years, UNHCR submitted a total of some 200,000 refugees for resettlement, while 130,000 refugees departed for new lives in resettlement countries. I am pleased to report that we have been able to maintain a 10% submission level under the category women and girls at risk in support of Executive Committee Conclusion No. 105(2006).

Yet, as indicated in the Report, global resettlement needs, which are assessed at some 800,000, and representing around 8% of the 10 million refugees under the care of UNHCR, far outstrip resettlement capacity. The number of resettlement countries, while having increased over the reporting period, from 22 to 26, has not led to marked increase in resettlement places, which remains at around 80,000. We need to continue to enhance our efforts to expand global resettlement capacity through increasing existing quotas, or, through establishing new resettlement programmes; we also encourage countries which resettle refugees on an ad hoc basis to establish regular resettlement programmes.

An important development which I would like to highlight is the recent adoption of the joint EU resettlement programme. The programme will help open up new opportunities to increase the number of resettlement places among EU States, expand available resources, and achieve a harmonized approach to resettlement priorities. Currently, the fifteen EU resettlement countries provide 6235 places, which constitute some 7% of the global total. We therefore welcome the objective to have EU

countries achieve 20,000 resettlement places per year by the 2020. UNHCR looks forward to working closely with all our partners to take this forward.

Second, on Resettlement Processing

The Report points out that the overall scope and volume of resettlement activity has expanded considerably over the past years. Notwithstanding this positive development, the number of submissions and departures over the two year period has declined by an overall 30%, and 25% respectively.

The lower level of submissions last year is due primarily to the complex profiles of the remaining refugee population in some of the large scale resettlement operations, in Asia and in the Middle East regions; it is also due to the growing inventory of cases under processing of some States which led to a reduction of further submissions in some operations.

A major challenge highlighted in the Report is the extended length of time taken by some resettlement States, to process the cases. Exacerbating the situation is the difficulty faced by some resettlement countries, for security reasons, in accessing refugee populations for resettlement processing. Yet another problem faced, is the difficulty encountered in some countries of asylum, to obtain authorization from the authorities of the country of asylum for refugees to leave the country.

All these obstacles have led to refugees being unable to benefit from protection and solutions in a timely way, and they therefore remain at risk.

In this regard, we are thankful for the cooperation, which resettlement States and NGO partners have extended, in concerted effort to seek ways and means to streamline the various clearances processes; this is already bearing fruit. To enable resettlement interviews of refugees who cannot be accessed in the countries of asylum, the use of video conferencing or transfer to other interview sites, including the ETCs to conduct interviews, is being promoted.

Notwithstanding the efforts currently being made, we need to continue to explore methodologies of resettlement processing which would help further expedite submissions and consideration of cases. At the upcoming ATCR, we will be discussing potential new refugee groups which could be subject to expedited forms of processing. We also urge asylum countries to facilitate the timely departure of refugees accepted for resettlement.

Third Resettlement within emergency response mechanisms

As highlighted in the Report, a major development last year was the large outflow of non-Libyan refugees as a result of the situation in Libya. Resettlement played a vital role in response to this emergency situation, and a major resettlement effort was mounted under the Global Resettlement Solidarity Initiative.

Despite the initial slow start, the response gained momentum. To date, 5,576 persons have been submitted for resettlement, with 1431 accepted; 1279 accepted refugees have departed for resettlement destinations. Another 205 persons were evacuated to the ETC in Romania to complete their resettlement formalities, some of whom have departed for their final destinations.

The remaining refugee population is at various stages of resettlement processing. While we are grateful for the support of all concerned States, we would like to urge that processing be expedited so that the refugees who are still at the border areas of Egypt and Tunisia, now for well over a year, could depart as soon as possible. At the end of the operation, we need full support of resettlement countries to ensure that not one refugee will be left behind.

In the context of resettlement as a response to emergency situations, I would like to mention that the three emergency transit facilities continued to play a critical role in the global resettlement scheme. In total, they provide around 500 places for evacuation of refugees at serious risk. Since their establishment, the three ETFs have hosted some 1500 refugees in transit. I am pleased to report that, more recently, the Slovak Republic has agreed to renew the use of the facilities and expand the capacity from 100 to 150 places in Humenne. We would like to thank the governments of Romania, Slovakia and the Philippines for continuing to host these centers

Let me now touch on the fourth issue- Resettlement as part of comprehensive solutions and strategic use of resettlement

We are glad to report that resettlement is increasingly mainstreamed into the protection and solutions strategies of operations, and increasingly finding its place within comprehensive solutions strategies. This illustrates the non-hierarchical mix of durable solutions which should mutually reinforce one another. Resettlement, like other solutions, should not operate in isolation.

While resettlement as a protection tool should be available to any refugee in need anywhere, UNHCR has, in line with ExCom Conclusion 109, also focused, as priorities, on protracted refugee situations, where resettlement can provide a durable solution, and serve a burden sharing role with host States within a comprehensive framework of solutions.

In this context, UNHCR continues to support the strategic use of resettlement. Where used strategically, resettlement can help open up opportunities for protection and solutions, not only in protracted refugee situations, but also in response to new outflows. While encouraging a strategic use of resettlement more broadly, the Resettlement Service and regional Bureaux are working with the resettlement community on seven priority situations for a strategic use of resettlement, to garner greater resettlement support around sets of agreed wider strategic outcomes. It is important to acknowledge, however, that factors which constrain other outcomes could be beyond UNHCR's control; yet, limited achievements in other solutions, should not put in doubt that resettlement can operate to bring new lives and hope to the many refugees in protracted situation.

Fifth – on Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees

During the reporting period, key challenges in the integration of resettled refugees, were increasingly discussed and good practices explored at the ATCR. The latest Working Group on Resettlement in Melbourne hosted by the Australian co-chairs provided a valuable opportunity for various key actors to have an on-site learning experience from a unique integration model.

There is clear recognition that the integration process is a continuum which starts in the country of asylum, and goes through various stages in the country of resettlement. As placement and integration takes place at the local level, the critical role played by local municipalities and communities to create a welcoming environment is increasingly emphasized. Twinning arrangements were firmed up between a number of advanced resettlement countries and emerging ones, including some in Latin America, to mutually learn and improve selection and integration processes.

As noted in the Report, a recent event titled “Skills Share Day” was successfully organised in Brussels by UNHCR and its partners, IOM and ICMC and supported by Denmark and Sweden, to learn and share resettlement skills and knowledge among EU countries. This event came as a culmination of a series of capacity building projects supported by the EU to harmonize approaches to resettlement and promote mutual support. We are confident that such partnership activities will continue to help strengthen resettlement programmes in the EU.

I would like to take this opportunity to stress here that, as part of the integration process, it is important that resettling refugees be provided with long term residency status, as refugees, in the country of resettlement with clear possibility to become citizens of the country eventually.

Integration of resettled refugees will remain a key item for discussion at the upcoming ATCR in July.

Now let me turn to the last set of issues, that is, Resettlement Management, Coordination, and Partnerships

The *ATCR* remains the most important forum for global coordination of resettlement activities as well as for review of global resettlement policy and operational challenges. Refugees are increasingly gaining a voice in the forum, including through video link. Their perspectives are an inspiration, and increasingly seen as important to guide approaches to integration.

We are heartened that the resettlement priorities set out in the *Annual Global Resettlement Needs Assessment* document, which is generated from field operations, in consultation with host country counterparts, benefit from increasing support and endorsement by all resettlement partners.

I would like to highlight here the challenge of *resourcing* resettlement. Resettlement is a labor intensive and time consuming activity. Every year, UNHCR’s core staff

capacity can only deliver around 50% of referrals. The other 50% depends on affiliate workforce support; this includes Best Interest Determination (or BID) experts. We are thankful to resettlement countries, especially the US, Norway and the UK, for providing financial support to resettlement deployments, and to our NGO partners who are working with us to deploy experts and enhance capacity. These are partnerships we value and we look forward to continuing mutual support.

Over the past two years, UNHCR continued to enhance its *resettlement performance* through the development of tools, operational guidance and learning programmes. We are pleased to inform that the revised Resettlement Handbook was finalized and issued at last year's ATCR. Coming fifteen years after a first version was released in 1996, the Resettlement Handbook reflects the changing nature of resettlement, and provides guidance in new methodologies of identification and processing

Our *efforts in preventing and addressing resettlement fraud* were facilitated by OIOS audit of UNHCR Fraud Prevention and Control in Registration, RSD and Resettlement. The recommendations provided the Resettlement Service, a framework to take forward a plan of action. This remains an ongoing activity of focus for the Resettlement Service in collaboration with other functional Divisions as well as the regional Hubs.

I cannot leave this issue without thanking our *NGO partners as well as IOM*, who are all important partners, through the resettlement process. Their advocacy and operational support is very much appreciated. We will continue to enhance our collaboration for the benefit of refugees.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, I would like to mention that the pledges on resettlement made by twenty five countries at the Intergovernmental event at the ministerial level provide an encouraging outlook for resettlement. The pledges cover a wide range of areas in resettlement. We will continue to follow these up with the respective States.

Furthermore, I would like to urge resettlement countries, during these times of fiscal constraints, to minimise the impact of any austerity measures on their resettlement programmes.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the US, who chaired the ATCR for the period 2010-2011, and also the current Australia Chair, for their support. We are grateful to the Canadians for taking on the next - Chair, and look forward to working together the coming year.

I am confident that UNHCR can count on the support of ExCom members to enhance resettlement places and make resettlement available to a larger number of refugees, particularly those from protracted refugee situations.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

