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High Commissioner's Programme**

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Progress Report on Resettlement

Summary

This progress report provides an overview of UNHCR's resettlement activities, undertaken in close cooperation with its partners, since the report provided to the 54th meeting of the Standing Committee in June 2012. It reviews developments in the global resettlement programme and outlines current challenges and measures underway to address them.

Positive developments include growth in the number of countries with regular resettlement programmes; a marked increase in the number of resettlement submissions, as well as resettlement departures; increasing use of multi-year resettlement commitments; and enhanced capacity to offer solutions to vulnerable refugees through resettlement and other forms of admission. Resettlement provided international protection and a durable solution to more than 140,000 refugees during the reporting period.

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I. Expansion of global resettlement capacity

1. The number of regular resettlement States has grown to twenty-seven since June 2012, as Belgium and Switzerland announced the establishment of formal resettlement programmes. Germany, Hungary and Spain received the first arrivals under their recently established regular resettlement programmes. Meanwhile Japan has announced the shift from a pilot to a full-fledged resettlement programme as of March 2015, and Australia temporarily doubled the number of resettlement places offered for the period July 2012 to June 2013. A number of countries have also provided resettlement places on an *ad hoc* basis.
2. UNHCR's global capacity to respond effectively to resettlement needs has increased in large part due to collaboration with States on simplified submission procedures; the use of innovative resettlement processing methods, including conducting interviews by video conference; the availability of dossier submission places; and flexible selection criteria. In addition, UNHCR and its resettlement partners have enhanced their capacity to offer vulnerable refugees solutions through resettlement and other forms of admission as part of the emergency response to the Syrian and Libyan situations. Two-thirds of the pledges for Syrian refugees were made on an *ad hoc* basis or in addition to regular resettlement quotas.
3. Early offers of humanitarian admission and resettlement for Syrian refugees demonstrated the international community's solidarity and commitment to share the tremendous burden of responsibility borne by host countries in the surrounding region. UNHCR called upon States to provide resettlement or other forms of admission for up to 30,000 of the most vulnerable Syrian refugees by the end of 2014, and for an additional 100,000 Syrian refugees through 2016. Other forms of admission include expanded opportunities for family reunion, the extension of student or employment-related visas, and various forms of private sponsorship.
4. The last two years have seen a welcome focus on promoting resettlement and strengthening capacity to receive and support resettled refugees. In Europe, the Joint EU Resettlement Programme added specific vulnerable groups and UNHCR-identified geographic priorities to the categories of refugees whose resettlement is supported with EU funding. The Programme has also offered additional funding for new resettlement countries in Europe. UNHCR welcomes further financial commitments under the European Commission's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, approved for 2014-2020. In Latin America, more than 150 refugees were resettled since 2012 to Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay under the Solidarity Resettlement Programme, created under the auspices of the *Mexico Declaration and Plan of Action to Strengthen International Protection of Refugees in Latin America*. It is hoped that the new plan of action anticipated to emerge from the commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the *Cartagena Declaration on Refugees* in 2014 will include commitments from Latin American resettlement countries to assume increasing responsibility for their resettlement processing and integration programmes in the coming years. UNHCR recognizes the challenges that new and emerging resettlement countries face in ensuring the sustainability of programmes and providing integration support in difficult economic times; in this regard, realistic planning and predictable resource allocation are essential for resettlement efforts.
5. Despite the increase in resettlement States, resettlement needs continue to vastly outnumber the number of places made available. Including the Syrian refugees, it is estimated that more than 950,000 refugees globally are in need of resettlement. Yet, at present, approximately 80,000 regular places are made available on an annual basis, and 21 countries have offered places towards meeting the goal of providing resettlement or other forms of admission to 30,000 Syrian refugees by the end of 2014. There is also a lack of State receptiveness towards resettling certain refugee populations in need of resettlement, particularly Somali refugees. UNHCR will continue to advocate for the initiation and expansion of resettlement programmes; encourage countries that provide resettlement on an *ad hoc* basis to develop more predictable, regular programmes; maximize the opportunities presented by the Joint EU Resettlement Programme; and advocate for programmes to be responsive to protection needs.

II. Resettlement processing

6. UNHCR monitors its processing capacity and submission levels to ensure that resettlement targets are met and available resettlement places fully utilized. During the reporting period, the number of submissions increased markedly, from 75,080 in 2012 to 93,226 in 2013, despite the winding down of large-scale resettlement from Nepal and Thailand. This represents an increase of 24.6 per cent, reversing a trend of reduced submissions during 2010-2012. Contributing factors include increased submissions from priority situations, including Afghan, Colombian, and Congolese refugees; the adoption of simplified processing methodologies, such as group resettlement from Rwanda; and an increased deployment of resettlement and child protection experts. In April 2013 the resettlement of refugees from Bhutan reached the milestone of 100,000 submissions since the start of the programme in 2007. On a further positive note, the number of women and girls at risk submitted for resettlement exceeded the 10 per cent target set by the Executive Committee Conclusion No. 105 (LVII) (2006) in both years.

7. Resettlement departures also increased dramatically, from 61,649 in 2011, to 69,252 in 2012 and 71,411 in 2013. Contributing factors include efforts by States to streamline security screening requirements; redirection of submissions to expedite processes; the use of innovative processing methods; and the use of Emergency Transit Facilities.

8. UNHCR redoubled its engagement with resettlement countries to address processing challenges, focusing on reducing lengthy processing times; avoiding the use of discriminatory selection criteria, such as “integration potential”; streamlining documentary and procedural requirements; and overcoming the difficulties faced by some resettlement countries in accessing certain refugee populations due to safety and security concerns. As part of the overall effort to expedite the processing of individual cases, UNHCR increased the use of the Abridged Resettlement Registration Form template globally and is in discussion with States about simplified procedures. This ongoing collaboration is essential to enable the most effective use of UNHCR’s processing capacity.

III. Resettlement within emergency response

9. Resettlement has played an increasingly important protection role in UNHCR’s response to emergencies, such as the Libyan and Syrian situations. A global resettlement solidarity initiative for non-Libyan refugees fleeing to Tunisia and Egypt resulted in 18 countries providing resettlement for 2,875 refugees stranded in Shousha Camp in Tunisia and 1,525 refugees in Salloum Camp in Egypt. Shousha Camp was closed in June 2013, while resettlement of the residual caseload in Salloum continues. As a result of this experience, several countries agreed to reserve a number of places in their annual resettlement quotas for possible emergency situations. The solidarity initiative also introduced an approach of combining refugee status determination (RSD) and resettlement interviews to expedite case processing, and approach that has been instrumental in responding to the Syrian crisis.

10. The situation of refugees in the Syrian Arab Republic deteriorated rapidly in the last two years, severely affecting the capacity to process the cases of vulnerable refugees. In 2013, increased departures from the Syrian Arab Republic were made possible by collaboration on alternative processing methodologies, including conducting interviews by video conference; emergency evacuations to the Emergency Transit Facilities (ETFs); and the establishment of a “land bridge” for the departure of refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic to resettlement countries via Beirut International Airport. Multi-year commitments by some countries to resettle Iraqi refugees are particularly welcome, as resettlement continues to be the main durable solution in the midst of continued insecurity.

11. UNHCR has made more systematic use of ETFs to provide emergency protection and enable resettlement processing for refugees in countries that are or become difficult to access. The number of refugees relocated to ETFs in Romania and Slovakia increased from 230 in 2011 to 482 in 2013. A third ETF, located in the Philippines, accommodated 19

refugees in 2013. In total, over 2,200 refugees have been brought to safety at an ETF before proceeding to a final country of resettlement. UNHCR continues to seek State collaboration, however, to address the challenges of long processing times and refusals of preliminarily-approved cases evacuated to the ETFs.

IV. Resettlement as an integral component of comprehensive solutions strategies

12. The Solutions Steering Group is an inter-divisional working group, has been tasked with ensuring a strategic and coherent approach to all aspects of solutions, including resettlement. Its work is discussed in the *Update on solutions* (EC/65/SC/CRP.15).

13. Contact groups for individual priority situations can serve to facilitate collaboration among resettlement countries, host States and UNHCR, and can provide an effective vehicle to advance the strategic use of resettlement, helping to achieve solutions for refugees who remain in host countries, as well as for those who are resettled. Contact groups can promote multi-year commitments to ensure predictability and sustainability for resettlement efforts; they can also collaborate to strengthen protection mechanisms, including livelihoods and legal strategies, for refugees in host countries.

14. During the reporting period, contact groups worked on the following priority situations: Afghans in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Afghans in Pakistan, Colombians in Ecuador, and Bhutanese in Nepal. In 2013, two new contact groups were established: the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) Refugee Contact Group, chaired by the United States of America, and the Syrian Core Group, chaired by Sweden.

15. By the end of 2013, almost half a million refugees had fled the Democratic Republic of the Congo, making the Congolese refugee population the sixth largest in the world. The DRC Refugee Contact Group is supporting a sub-regional strategy to enhance durable solutions for Congolese refugees. This strategy includes a multi-year plan of action to enhance resettlement of Congolese refugees from Burundi, Rwanda, United Republic of Tanzania, and Uganda, as well as to promote livelihoods and self-reliance activities and to support host communities. Over 18,000 DRC refugees have been submitted for resettlement as part of the commitment to resettle at least 50,000 refugees between 2012 and 2017.

16. The Syrian Core Group provides an opportunity for States to consider how resettlement, in combination with other interventions, can help ensure protection for the most vulnerable refugees in the context of the ongoing conflict and humanitarian emergency. UNHCR has also convened a Geneva-based Resettlement Working Group with representatives from the host countries neighbouring the Syrian Arab Republic and in the region, to regularly exchange information and provide feedback on the implementation of the resettlement and humanitarian admission programmes for Syrian refugees.

V. Resettlement management

17. Since June 2012 UNHCR has issued seven policy and operational guidelines and has strengthened its staff training to improve global coherence and efficiency in resettlement delivery. The Resettlement Learning Programme for field staff has been successfully delivered in key regions, and a new e-learning tool on the identification of refugees in need of resettlement is being launched in June 2014.

18. Balancing the allocation of resources among its core protection functions to ensure that one function is not privileged over the others is a continual challenge for UNHCR. Resettlement is a resource intensive function; therefore UNHCR gives priority to critical and managerial resettlement staff, relying on deployments of affiliate workforce to supplement processing capacity. The resettlement deployment schemes provide a cost-effective and flexible means for UNHCR to quickly deploy experienced staff where they are most needed. Deployees under various schemes continued to be responsible for approximately one-half of the resettlement submissions made during the reporting period.

19. The Resettlement Service supports collaboration and training to ensure compliance with anti-fraud guidance throughout all stages of refugee processing. Overall, UNHCR is focusing on broadening policy, improving systems, strengthening awareness, developing tools, expanding training, analysing trends and strengthening capacity to investigate fraud. UNHCR is expanding its policy and guidance on assessing and responding to fraud perpetrated by persons of concern. The Resettlement Service piloted a training program in February 2014 that is designed to build a cohort of field staff members with investigative and reporting skills. Resettlement staff have also benefitted from States sharing expertise on document forensics and fraud prevention tools.

20. Enhancements to UNHCR's proGres database will improve the capacity to record, retrieve and analyse data related to persons of concern and improved tracking and analysis of fraud trends. After a successful pilot phase in 2013, the global deployment of UNHCR's Biometrics Project (anticipated for late 2014) will significantly enhance fraud prevention systems.

VI. Reception and integration of resettled refugees

21. To ensure that resettled refugees are well received and supported to become full participants in their new communities, UNHCR has indicated minimum requirements in *The Integration of Resettled Refugees: Essentials for Establishing a Resettlement Programme and Fundamentals for Sustainable Resettlement Programmes*, a short guide released in 2013.¹ Meanwhile, the Office has undertaken significant efforts to better understand the integration needs of refugees arriving in Europe. The European Commission-funded project *Refugee Integration: Capacity and Evaluation* set out methods of evaluating integration, promoted good practices and examined the key factors affecting refugee integration.

VII. Coordination and partnerships

22. UNHCR relies upon not only the partnership of resettlement States, but also collaboration with non-governmental organizations (NGOs). This collaboration covers areas such as the identification of resettlement needs, community outreach, information-sharing, planning, advocacy, and reception and integration post-resettlement.

23. The Working Group on Resettlement (WGR) and the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement (ATCR) served as important multilateral fora for UNHCR, States and NGOs to discuss and advance resettlement issues of common interest, under leadership of the Australian and Canadian chairs in 2012 and 2013. A review and reform process was begun in the spring of 2014 under the leadership of Denmark, the current chair, to ensure that the ATCR/WGR continue to offer opportunities to strategize on meeting resettlement priorities, share good practices, and enhance processing.

24. Australia, Canada, Norway and the United States of America provided critical support for deployment schemes, which provide surge resettlement capacity to many country operations. In 2013, 104 resettlement and Best Interests Determination experts were deployed through the UNHCR-ICMC Resettlement Deployment Scheme, and RefugePoint provided experts who were deployed mainly in Africa. UNHCR and IOM signed a Framework Agreement on Standard Operation Procedures for Resettlement Operations in the Field, which clarifies respective roles and responsibilities.

¹ Available at: www.refworld.org/docid/51b81d9f4.html

VIII. Outlook and conclusion

25. Due to close cooperation among UNHCR, resettlement countries, IOM and NGOs, resettlement has provided both international protection and a durable solution to over 140,000 refugees during the reporting period. There was significant progress in increasing responsiveness to emergency situations, harmonizing and simplifying procedures, and enhancing global capacity to receive refugees. UNHCR continues to encourage resettlement and host countries to maximize solutions opportunities for refugees.

26. Despite this positive outlook, there are a number of challenges ahead. The following areas warrant particular attention:

- *Expanding global capacity and response:* Resettlement needs continue to outstrip the number of places available, particularly emergency places.
- *Streamlining procedures:* Resettlement processing challenges require collaboration and the dedication of resources by UNHCR and States to further simplify resettlement procedures while ensuring the integrity of the process.
- *Preserving the humanitarian foundation of resettlement:* UNHCR will continue to advocate for States to avoid restrictive selection criteria and to receive refugees recognized under UNHCR's mandate.
- *Expanding reception and integration capacity:* UNHCR will support the efforts of resettlement partners and networks to reinforce the integration capacity of receiving communities.
- *Situating resettlement within comprehensive solutions:* UNHCR will work with host and resettlement countries to integrate resettlement more effectively with other durable solutions.
- *Promoting multi-year commitments:* The use of multi-year resettlement commitments enables predictable planning and resource allocation, particularly for priority refugee situations and protracted situations, such as that of Somali refugees.
- *Boosting field capacity:* UNHCR will provide field-oriented guidance, practical training and operational tools, as well as strategic deployments of affiliate workforce.
- *Fostering partnerships:* UNHCR will continue to ensure the effective management of global resettlement efforts through partnerships with the wider NGO community, IOM and other institutions.
- *Improving global coordination:* UNHCR and resettlement partners will promote the ATCR/WGR process to enhance the effectiveness and capacity of the global resettlement programme.
- *Ensuring the integrity of the protection response:* UNHCR will develop specialized training and guidance on fraud prevention, investigation and response, and on ensuring integrity at all stages of the protection-case management process.

27. UNHCR looks forward to continued close collaboration with all partners in our joint efforts to offer refugees security, renewed hope, restored dignity, and the opportunity to rebuild their lives through resettlement.