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**Update on resettlement***Summary*

This report provides an update on UNHCR's resettlement activities, which were carried out in close cooperation with its partners, since the report presented to the 60<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee in July 2014. It reviews key developments in resettlement processing over the reporting period, and sets out priorities to expand capacity, including through coordinated action with States and non-governmental organizations, and to bring to scale new approaches to resettlement procedures.

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## I. Introduction

1. Global forced displacement has reached unprecedented levels since the last update on UNHCR's resettlement activities in July 2014. With more than 20 million refugees worldwide and numbers increasing daily, persons of concern to UNHCR have drawn international attention, particularly in the European context where the arrivals of refugees and migrants increased dramatically in 2015. Although the search for solutions has become a matter of compelling, if not urgent, concern, durable solutions remain elusive. Voluntary repatriation is at its lowest level in three decades, and possibilities for local integration are limited. Against this background, international responsibility sharing has gained momentum, and resettlement has been strengthened as it has come to play a crucial role in international efforts to assist refugees.

2. During the past two years, there has been a paradigm shift in the approach to resettlement activities. Not only have States increased quotas meaningfully within the reporting period, they have shown their openness to designing new processing modalities and recognized the value of considering pathways to third countries outside of the traditional resettlement framework. Recently, UNHCR focused on advocating complementary approaches in the context of the high-level meeting on global responsibility sharing through pathways for admission of Syrian refugees, which was held on 30 March 2016 and opened by the United Nations Secretary-General.

## II. Resettlement processing and impacts

3. UNHCR has processed 1 million submissions for resettlement in the course of the last decade. In 2015, 134,044 submissions were made, increasing from some 103,890 reported the previous year, 92,915 in 2013 and 74,840 in 2012. Within four years, UNHCR's annual submissions has increased by a striking 79 per cent.

4. Out of the 1 million submissions for resettlement, 24 per cent were for refugees from Myanmar (241,400). The high total number of submissions was also due to other priority situations, including Iraq (185,800), Bhutan (113,900) and Somalia (110,700). Owing to the deteriorating situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, efforts to process resettlement submissions for Syrian refugees intensified in 2014 and 2015, with some 80,000 refugees having been referred to States for resettlement since early 2011.<sup>1</sup> They represented the largest group in 2014 and 2015. On average two out of five submissions were for Syrian refugees in 2015, compared to one out of five the previous year. Other top countries of origin in 2015 included the Democratic Republic of the Congo (20,527), Iraq (11,161), Somalia (10,193) and Myanmar (9,738). With the Syrian Arab Republic, these countries accounted for 78 per cent of all resettlement submissions last year.

5. UNHCR offices in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region processed an increasing number of submissions, from 22 per cent of overall submissions in 2014 (23,169) to 40 per cent in 2015 (53,331). Although the number of submissions from UNHCR offices in the Africa region rose in absolute terms from 35,079 in 2014 to 38,870 in 2015, the region's relative share dropped from 34 per cent to 29 per cent. A comparable trend was also observed in the Asia and Pacific region, with the number of submissions declining from 27,450 in 2014 to 21,620 in 2015. This is a significant shift from levels observed in the previous decade as a result of the need to focus on priority cases in other regions and the implementation of other

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<sup>1</sup> As at 31 December 2015.

solutions within the region. In 2015, Europe recorded the highest number of submissions in a decade (18,833), mainly Turkey. Some 1,390 submissions also originated from the Americas region in 2015, down from 1,800 in 2014.

6. Globally, resettlement continued to play a crucial role in UNHCR's protection response to forced displacement. Cases falling under the "legal and physical protection needs" category were prioritized, comprising about one third of submissions in 2014 and 2015. "Survivors of violence and/or torture" were the second largest group in 2015 at 24 per cent. In a decade, the number of submissions falling within the latter category almost quadrupled as a result of a shift in the composition of refugee populations and increased training for staff. The "lack of foreseeable alternative durable solutions" category accounted for 22 per cent of submissions in 2015, down from 26 per cent the previous year. With "women and girls at risk" prioritized in recent years, around 12 per cent of resettlement submissions fell within this category for the fifth consecutive year, exceeding UNHCR's objective by 2 per cent.

7. With the support of resettlement countries, countries hosting emergency transit facilities and other partners, continued emphasis was placed on adequate quotas for refugees in need of urgent or emergency removal from countries of asylum. In 2015, less than 1 per cent of cases (548) were deemed an "emergency priority" requiring evacuation in 72 hours. Some 14,727 individuals were given "urgent priority" needing removal within weeks. About 11 per cent of overall submissions were for individuals falling in the latter category, a slight 1 per cent increase over 2014.

8. In 2015, the United States of America remained the main recipient of UNHCR referrals, receiving 62 per cent of submissions (82,491). Other countries receiving submissions included Canada (22,886), Australia (9,321), Norway (3,806) and the United Kingdom (3,622). All five countries saw increases in the number of annual submissions they received, ranging from 18 per cent (United States of America) to 268 per cent (United Kingdom).

9. There have also been some notable milestones reached in terms of large-scale international resettlement efforts, with over 100,000 refugees from Bhutan resettled out of camps in Nepal to third countries. In addition, over 57,000 refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo were submitted for resettlement between 2012 and 2015 as part of the commitment to resettle at least 50,000 refugees by 2017.

### **III. Expanded resettlement capacity**

10. A number of resettlement countries, including Australia, Canada, Norway, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, announced significant increases in their resettlement quotas in 2015, with a view to achieving durable solutions for Syrian refugees, among others. On a further positive note, UNHCR welcomed the adoption of the Council of the European Union conclusion on 20 July 2015 on resettling some 22,500 persons in need of international protection from outside the European Union (EU). As many as 11 EU Member States will implement a resettlement programme for the first time.

11. In response to increasing quotas, UNHCR assessed its resettlement management capacity. As part of this process, the Office examined the following: its overall capacity to identify refugees in need of resettlement, including through community-based protection activities and protection-sensitive registration; the relationship between resettlement and refugee status determination; and integrity at all stages of the case management process. In addition, the assessment helped determine UNHCR's requirements for contributing to a wider range of solutions opportunities, such as complementary pathways, including through mapping existing programmes and developing relevant policy and operational frameworks.

12. UNHCR has been working with field operations, resettlement countries and other partners to scale up capacity for resettlement. Additional resettlement, registration and community-based protection staff, including affiliate workforce, have been deployed in particular to Africa and MENA. UNHCR is also further developing specific resettlement guidance and training for staff with a view to improving their expertise. To continue to meet growing resettlement requirements, UNHCR launched a supplementary appeal on strengthening refugee resettlement in the amount of US\$ 39.2 million in February 2016.<sup>2</sup>

13. In the context of the Syria crisis and owing to the need to process resettlement cases expeditiously, UNHCR, resettlement countries and other partners have sought to reduce overlap and redundancy by making case processing simpler and more efficient. Initiatives in the MENA region, which merged the refugee status determination and resettlement procedures into one and enabled rapid processing, were instrumental in this regard. In the course of 2015, various other methods for streamlining resettlement processing were also developed and tested in partnership with States, including a pilot identification programme<sup>3</sup> and a humanitarian transfer programme.<sup>4</sup> Such efforts are in line with UNHCR's long-standing efforts and engagement with resettlement countries to simplify global resettlement procedures and to redesign the process based on each partner's strengths and added value.

14. In an effort to ensure the integrity of the expanded programme, UNHCR examined its global case processing during the reporting period to determine its vulnerability to fraud. UNHCR has since undertaken a number of steps to improve the reliability of processing, including by introducing additional safeguards such as increased programmatic oversight and enhanced monitoring. The anti-fraud policy, which covers fraud involving persons of concern in all protection and assistance programmes, is being revised in order to improve tracking and reporting of fraudulent activities and, when appropriate, take prompt corrective action, conduct structured investigations, perform ongoing risk analysis as well as implement fraud mitigation strategies. The policy further highlighted the importance of using enhanced biometric registration.

#### **IV. Coordination and partnerships**

15. Resettlement rests on strong partnerships, involving a range of actors. A number of initiatives, including on policy development and case processing, advanced the resettlement agenda through collaborative efforts during the reporting period.

16. In line with the reform process initiated in 2014 under the leadership of Denmark, the Annual Tripartite Consultations for Resettlement (ATCR) and Working Group for Resettlement (WGR) have sought to strengthen their governance and accountability, including that of Core and Contact Groups'. With respect to resettlement in MENA, the Syrian Core Group, with 23 participating States, played a critical role in mobilizing support for large-scale resettlement, testing new approaches to processing and forging a link with refugee-hosting States neighbouring the Syrian Arab Republic.

<sup>2</sup> Since launching the supplementary appeal on strengthening refugee resettlement and other pathways to admission and solutions, UNHCR has received a total of US\$ 28 million in contributions for the implementation of the "resettlement plus" strategy, available from <http://www.unhcr.org/56bddc689.html>.

<sup>3</sup> The pilot identification programme is a streamlined resettlement referral mechanism which was developed with the Government of Australia.

<sup>4</sup> The humanitarian transfer programme is an arrangement established for accelerated resettlement to Canada, which has enabled Canada to welcome over 25,000 refugees in less than four months.

17. Regional approaches to resettlement were also encouraged. In 2015, the final report of an independent evaluation on the Solidarity Resettlement Programme, which was carried out in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay, was shared with the governments concerned. In the context of the Brazil Plan of Action, findings from this report will help chart the way forward for resettlement in the region in the spirit of solidarity and responsibility sharing.

18. In 2015, UNHCR broadened its partnership base with respect to the resettlement deployment scheme. In this regard, the Danish Refugee Council, the International Catholic Migration Commission, the International Refugee Assistance Project and RefugePoint partnered with UNHCR to provide surge resettlement capacity to many country operations. In total, some 180 resettlement experts were deployed, contributing around half of the resettlement submissions UNHCR processed globally. New legal and operational frameworks were introduced to strengthen and harmonize partnerships for deployment. In addition, a RefugePoint global mapping exercise on collaboration with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) helped strengthen partnerships for the identification of refugees in need of resettlement. The exercise sought to enhance referrals systems and highlight good practices while increasing the quantity and quality of resettlement referrals from NGOs.

## V. Complementary pathways for protection

19. In the context of large movements of refugees and the increasing strain on hosting countries, UNHCR has encouraged non-hosting States to consider developing approaches for admitting refugees, including by creating and expanding pathways for admission and stay that are specifically designed to provide protection to refugees. Such pathways may include special humanitarian visas, private sponsorship programmes, family reunification, labour mobility schemes, and academic scholarships and apprenticeships. Although greater emphasis has been placed on admitting Syrian refugees, UNHCR is working with NGOs, States and refugees in all regions to remove barriers to global responsibility sharing.

## VI. Outlook and conclusion

20. In the coming years, UNHCR's overall resettlement strategy and activities will aim to deliver against increasing quotas, engage with emerging resettlement countries and enhance the efficiency of the resettlement process while maintaining the integrity of procedures. The projected number of submissions in 2016 is likely to exceed 140,000. This would constitute a 20-year high and a near doubling of submissions since 2012. UNHCR will continue to rely on a wide array of partners, not the least of which are States, to ensure that resettlement is to the benefit of as many refugees as possible.

21. Looking ahead, UNHCR will consolidate and build on progress achieved, including to:

- *Expand global capacity*: Resettlement processing capacity needs to be enhanced, in line with, and subject to, support for the supplementary appeal on strengthening refugee resettlement.
- *Improve coordination and streamline procedures*: UNHCR will conduct, together with resettlement countries, a comprehensive review of the resettlement process in order to better understand the relationship between case processing at UNHCR and at the State level, reduce overlap and redundancy, and strengthen the quality of decision-making. The exercise will aim to harness innovations in case processing, particularly those developed in the context of the Syria crisis.

- *Ensure effectively targeted resettlement:* UNHCR will continue to advocate resettlement programmes that are global and preserve the humanitarian foundation of resettlement, including by focusing on vulnerable refugees. In addition, UNHCR intends to optimize the utility of emergency resettlement quotas through enhanced advocacy, coordination and process reform.
- *Seek complementary pathways for protection:* With a view to taking forward efforts to provide protection and achieve solutions, including through complementary pathways, UNHCR will roll out operational guidance and training to support refugees in identifying and pursuing pathways to protection for themselves.
- *Ensure the integrity of the resettlement process:* Building on efforts to strengthen the integrity of the resettlement process, UNHCR will roll out its revised anti-fraud policy, along with training tools, and conduct oversight missions. This initiative will be supported by a network of senior UNHCR integrity officers with a view to covering all protection and assistance programmes.
- *Strengthen partnerships:* UNHCR will foster capacity and capabilities in resettlement through ongoing implementation of the ATRC and WGR reform process and ensure Core and Contact Groups remain effective and responsive to resettlement needs. The Office will promote the inclusion of new and emerging resettlement countries and revisit twinning mechanisms for the exchange of good practices between countries and other initiatives for capacity building in resettlement.
- *Foster partnerships:* Based on the recommendations of the RefugePoint global mapping exercise, UNHCR will broaden the network of NGOs involved in refugee identification and referral by promoting collaboration between UNHCR field offices and local NGOs.

22. Resettlement has proven to be not only a durable solution but also an invaluable protection tool and responsibility-sharing instrument that has stood the test of time. The growth in activities throughout the reporting period underscores this fact, and UNHCR commends all actors that have played their part committedly and with flexibility. In going forward, UNHCR will continue to rely on key partnerships to harness innovation in resettlement processing and advance new policy directions related to complementary pathways, to ensure that an increasing number of refugees can more readily access this important and critical durable solution.

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