

Item 4 (a)

**Introductory Remarks of Steven Corliss
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**New Approaches to Solutions (EC/67/SC/CRP.14)
66th Meeting of the Standing Committee**

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Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates,

Thank you for this opportunity to add a few introductory remarks on the Conference Room Paper 14 on New Approaches to Solutions. Let me begin by stating the obvious; solutions are elusive today.

Earlier this week, on World Refugee Day, UNHCR released the *Global Trends in Forced Displacement in 2015*. Once again, the statistics are sobering. Last year, 1.8 million people were forced to flee their countries and become refugees. Only 340,500 refugees found a solution by going home, resettling in another country or by integrating in their country of asylum. In other words, for every refugee who found a solution in 2015, five new refugees joined the ranks of the displaced.

The consequence is protracted forced displacement. The question is how we can we respond to this reality in a way that gives people a more normal life, enables them to contribute to their communities and prepares them for solutions in the future, whatever form they take.

As reflected in the Conference Room Paper, UNHCR calls this the “progressive approach” to solutions. We do not want to be misunderstood. Let me assure you. We are not simply seeking to open a “backdoor” to local integration or to leave countries hosting refugees with even greater and more unmanageable humanitarian responsibilities.

We are convinced, however, that new approaches are needed. We also believe that refugees who are educated, who gain skills and experience and who build their assets while in asylum will be better able to seize opportunities for solutions when they become available, whether through voluntary repatriation, resettlement or – where offered – local integration.

For decades now, UNHCR has sought to anchor refugees within the broader framework of development. In 1967, Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan – then the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees – expressed confidence that UNHCR “had won acceptance for the agreement that development plans which disregard the presence of large numbers of refugees . . . would quite simply be doomed to failure.”

Optimism is a requirement for the job of High Commissioner. Speaking nearly fifty years ago, Prince Sadruddin was perhaps too optimistic. Let me say, however, that we have a renewed sense of optimism today. In the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 193 Member States of the United Nations committed to “leave no one behind.” This includes refugees.

We also see an emerging consensus on the importance of pursuing more inclusive, sustainable and development-oriented approaches to forced displacement. This reflects a growing realization that “business as usual” is untenable and a convergence of interest among governments – both those that host refugees and those that fund our work – humanitarian and development actors, the World Bank and other international financial institutions, civil society and the private sector.

UNHCR has been a catalyst in promoting new thinking and building new coalitions through the important events that have taken place during 2016. These include the Solutions Alliance Roundtable and the London conference on the Syria crisis in February, the Wilton Park Forum on New Approaches to Protracted Forced Displacement and the World Bank Spring meetings in April, the World Humanitarian Summit in May and, looking forward, the September summits in New York.

The Wilton Park Forum highlighted the core elements of such a new approach. The Wilton Park Principles are: (1) work through national and local systems, (2) support host communities and build social cohesion, (3) enable economic participation and stimulate growth, (4) provide impactful and innovative financing, and (5) improve the data and evidence base. The logic of the Wilton Park principals also applies to ensuring the sustainability of reintegration following return.

We are already working along all of these lines of action and are changing the way UNHCR operates in order to seize new opportunities. Our 2014 *Policy on Alternatives to Camps* – at its foundation – is about promoting synergies between humanitarian action and development in a way that serves both refugees and host communities.

Through UNHCR's global strategies for public health and education, we are pursuing mainstreaming refugees within national and local service delivery systems. Our global strategy for settlement and shelter promotes a more holistic approach to planning that takes into consideration local communities, services, markets and infrastructure. Our global strategy for livelihoods – which we will discuss further tomorrow – is all about making refugees contributors rather than “beneficiaries.”

Translating these good ideas into practice is challenging. UNHCR needs to adapt and make several important shifts. These include a shift in our horizon to a longer-term perspective and a shift in our engagements to build broader coalitions and a shift in our own expertise and capacities.

UNHCR's biennium planning and budgeting process presents an obstacle to longer-term, strategic planning for solutions, as well as to partnering with development actors. Supported by the Solutions Steering Group, we are piloting multi-year protection and solutions strategies this year in six countries – Costa Rica, Ecuador, Ghana, Senegal, Uganda and Tanzania.

Through these pilots, we are gaining experience with establishing a longer-term strategic vision, setting key targets and leveraging new partnerships. Going forward, we will expand the initiative to fifteen more country operations and will work to fulfil UNHCR's World Humanitarian Summit commitment to making this multi-year approach work.

UNHCR's Seeds for Solutions initiative has enabled more than 20 country operations to pursue more solutions-oriented programming. With technical support from the Solutions Steering Group, UNHCR country operations funded through the Seeds initiative have served as a testing ground for new concepts and approaches that have facilitated our movement toward multi-year planning.

UNHCR also needs to work differently and with new partners. We see the Solutions Alliance as a promising platform for action – particularly the new multi-stakeholder “national groups” that are now active in Somalia, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. These groups bring together national authorities, donors, development partners, including UNDP, and key civil society actors.

Let me say a few words about our growing strategic partnership with the World Bank. The Wilton Park principles highlight the importance of evidence and financing. UNHCR cannot simply say that including refugees in national and local development planning yields benefits and facilitates solutions to forced displacement. We need to prove it. We also cannot call for mainstreaming refugees into national services or for giving them the possibility participate in the economy, while ignoring the need for investment and financing to make this possible.

The World Bank has clear comparative advantages in these areas and can complement our work. UNHCR is also broadening its partnerships and drawing upon the expertise of other development partners, including the OECD, the ILO and International Trade Centre. We do not aspire to become a development agency, but we do need to engage more effectively with development processes.

Thank you.