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Thematic discussion two - 17 October 2017

UK speech in panel one: How can we better prepare for and respond rapidly to large movements of refugees?

H.E. Ambassador Julian Braithwaite, Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom:

Thank you Chair.

Distinguished delegates, it is a great pleasure to have been asked to share reflections on improving needs assessment, planning and preparedness.

While we are all familiar with the global figures, they retain the power to shock. In just ten years, the number of displaced people has almost doubled to more than 65 million - some 22.5 million of them refugees. At the same time, more than 80 per cent of refugee crises last for more than ten years, two in five more than twenty years.

This tell us three things:

First, the need for a truly global response to this shared challenge. And I wish to start by commending the huge efforts of host countries in supporting refugee and displaced populations.

Second, that we cannot wait for disaster and crises to hit but must better predict, pre-empt, mitigate and – where possible - prevent them. Addressing the root causes of conflict and displacement must remain our top priority.

Third, that effective long-term planning is essential to delivering the comprehensive response needed.

The CRRF as a basis for a more effective response

The good news is that the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) gives us a strong platform on which to build. At its heart, it is a commitment to move beyond just life-saving assistance to investments in

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jobs, education and services, and support for inclusive economic development in host countries.

To do so, it recognises the need for a more joined up humanitarian and development response; the importance of putting in place the right reception and admission systems; of effective needs assessment; and the benefits of working through national systems and bolstering existing infrastructure in a way that benefits host communities as well.

We must build on these elements through the Programme of Action.

Improving needs assessment

Comprehensive needs assessments are the basis on which comprehensive responses can be delivered. That is why we must deliver on the agreement in the Grand Bargain for better joint and impartial needs assessments.

This is yet to make the transition from the page into practice. Multiple agencies too often separately assess need against their particular mandate, leaving some people and their needs behind. Nor do humanitarian assessments provide enough information to enable longer-term planning to begin.

In practice – and for the Programme of Action – we need organisations and agencies to collaborate better. This is in line with the Secretary General's vision for a reformed UN system that is more accountable, agile, transparent, effective and decentralised.

It means sharing and disaggregating data systematically and transparently, co-ordinating data collection and harmonising methodologies. And then bringing that expertise together under a single, joint *risks, vulnerability and needs analysis*. That is what ultimately lays the foundations for collaborative targeting and joined-up humanitarian and development planning and tools.

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Shifting this doesn't – and mustn't – mean a focus on development responses alone, with long discussions in capitals that delay the emergency response or distract from meeting immediate humanitarian needs. Saving lives is always the imperative. But it does mean thinking from day one about the long-term needs of refugees and host communities and the development response that will be required.

For that reason, a Global Response Group of the kind suggested could ensure a comprehensive approach was embedded from the start of a response. It will be important that this does not duplicate existing response coordination structures but adds value by providing a longer term perspective and high level political focus.

Better managing risk

Increasing the predictability and speed of a response also requires better management of risk. We should begin by recognising that refugee crises are often predictable. We can see conflicts developing, spot escalating tensions and identify growing risks. And we know that there are countries and regions that are more susceptible to repeat or regular refugee arrivals. At a local level, we can also assess the capacity of local services.

Using this information effectively, we can better plan and prepare for new refugee influxes, strengthen national and local systems in advance and more successfully coordinate a comprehensive long-term response. There are three areas here where we can focus more attention in delivering the CRRF.

First, greater investment in preparedness. We know it pays off. The UK helped fund a Return on Investment tool that looked at pre-disaster investments across six pilot countries, ranging from prepositioning supplies to strengthening infrastructure and specialist training. The evidence showed that every one pound invested in preparedness saves on average more than two pounds in humanitarian aid during a response and can increase the speed of responses by two weeks.

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Second, we should be thinking about supporting more pre-crisis financing mechanisms for predictable funding. This could include greater contingencies or flexible mechanisms, perhaps at a regional level, that could scale up existing programmes or support pre-designed contingency plans through national and local systems.

In Kenya, for example, we support a Hunger Safety Net Programme that can increase by almost four times the number of people receiving small regular cash transfers if triggered by satellite early warning data of drought. There is a case for linking similar triggers, with pre-agreed funding commitments, to movements of refugees. And the UK has also been working with the insurance industry on risk financing to help at-risk countries access capital if big disasters strike. What could we learn from this model for refugee response?

Third, and as is so often the case, context is king. When at least 60 per cent of refugees have sought shelter in an urban environment, we clearly need to think more about a response geared to cities.

That means taking into account the practicalities - improving overstretched infrastructure such as waste collection in refugee-hosting cities, as we do through the EBRD in Jordan.

And it means considering use of unoccupied buildings to house refugees, or innovative win-win rental agreements that benefit both local population and refugees - such as grants to help landowners build or renovate housing which refugees use for a set time – while managing the associated risks of pricing out urban poor.

We must also make sure that we are talking to the right people. In the urban context, those people are the mayors, local leaders and municipal authorities who are the frontline of the refugee response. They are the ones who know the needs of city populations, hosts and refugees alike - and what existing services best address them.

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How to embed better planning and risk management at the global level?

Of course, if we plan long term, we must also fund long term. For our part, the UK remains committed to providing 0.7% of our GNI on international aid, spending at least half of this aid on fragile states and regions and continuing to provide flexible, un-earmarked multiyear funding to the multilateral humanitarian system.

In Lebanon, the UK has pledged up to £40m per annum over four years to support the Government's Reaching All Children with Education Plan. That is getting children into school, but also providing a long term horizon to improve learning standards, teacher performance and reform the curriculum – benefiting refugees and host communities.

Greater predictability facilitates long-term planning and ultimately a more comprehensive and effective response. Embedding the commitment to long-term support through the CRRF and the Programme of Action is key. In doing so, we must build on existing initiatives such as the World Bank's \$2 billion IDA 18 refugee window and the Education Cannot Wait Initiative. We also need to consider how we can better engage the private sector in planning and preparedness as well as delivery.

Lastly, effective planning must go hand in hand with effective monitoring. The Programme of Action must provide for an effective, independent monitoring and evaluation approach for the Compact, likely sitting outside any single agency, to provide a comprehensive assessment of the successes and challenges of the new approach.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the CRRF provides a good foundation to better plan and prepare for a more comprehensive refugee response. Looking forward, we

Check against delivery

must ensure that planning is done both as early and as collaboratively as possible.

This must be underpinned by a more nuanced approach to risk. Crises are rarely unforeseeable. We can make informed predictions as to what kind of support might be needed and the best mechanisms through which to provide it. Building on existing systems and institutions must be a priority to provide the best long-term support for refugees and host communities.

These are principles Global Britain cares deeply about. Indeed, they are at the heart of the UK's new Humanitarian Reform Policy launched last week. In it, we commit to greater investment in resilience and preparedness, adopting longer term approaches to protracted crises and challenging the international humanitarian system to hold itself to account for delivering better for people affected by crises.

The Global Refugee Compact provides a real chance to deliver such shifts at the global level.

ENDS

Check against delivery

Thematic discussion two - 17 October 2017

UK intervention in panel two: How can we support States to receive large numbers of refugees in a safe and dignified manner?

NB: Time constraints mean this intervention was not made in this session.

Thank you co-chair.

We should begin by recognising that large movements of refugees are often predictable. We can identify growing risks, we know certain countries and regions are more susceptible to refugee movements and we can also assess local capacity to respond.

The World Bank also reports that forced displacement peaks at an average of four years after its onset, giving countries time to prepare.

With that knowledge, we should be better placed to provide support and predictable funding before a crisis hits, or refugee influx peaks.

So for the Programme of Action, we would want to see an ambition to invest more in preparedness, ranging from pre-positioning supplies to strengthening infrastructure and specialist training.

We should also put a marker down for more pre-crisis financing mechanisms for predictable funding. This could include greater contingencies or flexible mechanisms, perhaps at a regional level, that could scale up existing programmes.

To be most effective, these should support pre-designed contingency plans through national and local systems.

Thank you.

Check against delivery

Thematic discussion two - 17 October 2017

UK intervention in panel three: How can we support States to identify persons in need of international protection?

Thank you co-chairs, panel and delegates, for the interesting debate so far.

The UK has a long tradition of providing protection to those who need it and we consider all asylum claims lodged in the UK in accordance with our international obligations.

In year to June 2017, over 16,000 people were granted asylum, resettlement or an alternative form of protection in the UK.

With a well-established asylum system, the UK stands ready to offer expertise and advice on building asylum capacity and capability. For example, we have well established training programmes and comprehensive country guidance for case workers. For those granted protection, we ensure they have the same rights as UK nationals such as access to education, health and labour market.

The concept paper's suggested priority area of identity management, including registration, documentation and biometrics feels like the right place to start given swift registration and processing on arrival is vital.

And I echo the points made by Germany about the important role of biometrics in the process. And agree with Australia on importance of data exchange.

The UK, in principle, supports an 'asylum capacity support group' being included in a Programme of Action and we would welcome further discussion on this.

We should learn from existing best practice. The work of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) would be one place to start. The UK has provided a number of national asylum experts to other countries through EASO over many years.

Thank you.

Check against delivery

Thematic discussion two - 17 October 2017

UK intervention in panel four: How can we address specific needs within large movements?

Thank you co-chair and thank you to the panel.

When we talk about a comprehensive response this clearly needs to include all those with specific needs and for us all to challenge ourselves on whether we are doing all we can to take into account specific vulnerabilities.

To add to the discussion, there are two areas we could do more in the context of the Programme of Action:

- 1. To get a better common understanding of long-term vulnerability of refugees and host communities.*
- 2. Do more before crises hit.*

On the first, the Programme of Action could set out the need for a joint vulnerability and risk analysis that underpins the CRRF in each context. In practice this means sharing and disaggregating data systematically and transparently, co-ordinating data collection and harmonising methodology. Bringing together humanitarian and development assessment to get a more comprehensive picture of vulnerability.

We must obviously not wait until we have a perfect picture before we act at all. But a better shared analysis allows us to plan long-term development and humanitarian approaches that ensure specific needs are addressed systematically.

On the second point, we have heard a lot about the importance of building capacity to effectively address specific needs – whether getting the right skills or the right systems in place. In the Programme of Action it is important we recognise we can do this before crises hit too – investing in greater preparedness, developing contingency plans and building local and national systems.

Thank you.

Check against delivery

Thematic discussion three - 18 October 2017

UK intervention in panel one: how can we mobilise more resources for humanitarian and development assistance to host states?

Thank you co-chair and thank you to the panellists.

The UK is a strong supporter of the shift to long term investments in jobs, education and services for refugees and host communities – alongside life-saving humanitarian support – that is at the heart of the new approach set out in the CRRF. And where host countries commit to a long term vision of self-reliance – access to work, schools and services for refugees and host communities – the international community has a responsibility to help deliver that vision.

In that vein, we have 3 proposals for the Programme of Action:

- 1. The Programme of Action could commit to explore ways to provide more predictable pre-crisis financing. This could include greater contingencies or flexible mechanisms, perhaps at a regional level, linked to pre-designed contingency plans. This must be focused on long-term development funding to support government-led preparedness and mustn't duplicate existing humanitarian instruments.*
- 2. To recognise in the Programme of Action the importance of scaling up and flexing existing programmes. By doing so, where possible, avoiding parallel systems and strengthening national and local systems and integrated approaches.*
- 3. For the Programme of Action to commit to explore new ways to engage the private sector more systematically. Building on good practices, particular around job creation, insurance, digital solutions and trade.*

The UK stands ready to support such approaches building on the good foundations already established. These include the CRRF – which provides a strong framework to set out a long term investable plan. And examples such as the Ethiopia jobs compact where the international community has been able to bring significant resources behind concrete plans to create jobs for refugees and host communities.

Thank you.

Check against delivery

Thematic discussion three - 18 October 2017

UK intervention in panel two: How can we support the inclusion of refugees in national systems and services?

Thank you co-chair and thank you to the panellists and the room for an interesting discussion.

Given the long-term nature of refugee crises, our planning for support systems must clearly be similarly long term. I would like to suggest three points for consideration:

Firstly, planning: Provision for integrating refugees into existing national and local systems and services should be factored into countries' contingency planning and the international community must support host governments' capacity to deliver on these plans.

Secondly, funding: The UK would support a point in the Programme of Action on pre-agreed funding mechanisms to strengthen host country infrastructure and systems, set against triggers identified in contingency plans. And multi-year funding commitments from donors are essential – as, for example, the UK provides for education in Lebanon and Jordan – to ensure long-term planning capacity and delivery.

Thirdly, legacy. Actions need to benefit host countries and communities as well, ensuring equal access to health, education and other services in the short term and a longer term legacy of strengthened national systems and infrastructure.

Thank you.

Check against delivery

Thematic discussion three - 18 October 2017

UK intervention in panel three: how can we enhance economic inclusion and promote livelihood opportunities for all refugees in a way that benefits host countries and communities?

Thank you co-chair and thank you to the panel, in particular to ILO for highlighting what a truly comprehensive approach has enabled in Jordan.

The concept note identifies many important areas in enabling a greater focus on economic inclusion and livelihoods for refugees and host communities. As others have said, these must consider the specific needs and vulnerabilities of different groups, addressing the barriers they face to access economic opportunities.

As we have also heard, the policy environment in host countries is a critical element of this – especially access to the labour market and financial services. Helping support a conducive environment must be at the heart of the CRRF approach.

This means the international community bringing in the most relevant development actors with their considerable experience in this space. And engaging local and international private sector behind a common vision emphasising opportunities and helping manage risks. The Ethiopia jobs compact is a good example of innovative approaches in practice – with 100,000 jobs in the pipeline, 30,000 for refugees.

Let me conclude with a proposal for the Programme of Action – a commitment to explore innovative trade and non-aid instruments that can support a more conducive policy environment and catalyse private sector engagement in a comprehensive response.

Thank you.

Check against delivery

Thematic discussion three - 18 October 2017

UK intervention in panel four: How can we bring innovation to humanitarian assistance to achieve greater efficiency, effectiveness and accountability?

Thank you co-chair.

The UK is a strong supporter of innovation in the refugee response, including championing the jobs compact approach in Jordan and Ethiopia.

I would like to suggest four areas for consideration in the Programme of Action.

Firstly, on cash. The UK has committed to more than double our use of cash in crisis response by 2025, in recognition of the many benefits that have already been discussed by the panel and in the room, including greater efficiency, value for money and flexibility.

The Programme of Action should recognise the role cash has to play in facilitating the transition between humanitarian and development responses and the range of possible cash uses, including larger one-off transfers to support saving or investments.

Secondly, on innovations in funding. In Kenya, for example - as we have referenced elsewhere - the UK supports a programme that scales up support if triggered by satellite early warning of drought. Let's look at linking similar triggers on movements of refugees with pre-agreed funding commitments.

And the UK has been working with the insurance industry on risk financing to help at-risk countries access capital if big disasters strike. Could such an approach be applied to the refugee response?

Thirdly, refugee voices. These thematic meetings have clearly recognised the importance of ensuring refugees' voices are heard as part of the process of developing the Global Compact on Refugees. The Programme of Action should explore the scope to facilitate direct input from as wide a number of such voices as possible, including as part of the ongoing monitoring and evaluation process that the Compact will need to include.

This could take the form of annual surveys – perhaps using mobile phones and/or online – to set a baseline, gain a better understanding of priority areas and concerns, and constantly refine and hone responses to ensure they are meeting refugees' needs and aspirations.

Fourthly, the private sector. The Programme of Action should commit to explore new ways to more systematically engage the private sector, building on good practice particularly on job creation, digital solutions, investment and trade.

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A final point. We have discussed elsewhere the need for better assessment of vulnerability and risk. The Programme of Action could consider the need to explore what new, innovative tools around risk management and vulnerability could give us a better basis to plan and deliver joined-up humanitarian and long term development approaches.

Thankyou.