

NORDIC REGIONAL RESETTLEMENT MEETING ON
'RESETTLEMENT AS A MULTI-FACETED PROTECTION TOOL
AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO MIGRATION'
OSLO, 6 - 7 NOVEMBER 2001

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Nordic Regional Resettlement Meeting in Oslo, Norway, was co-hosted by the Norwegian Government and UNHCR. It was attended by representatives of the Governments of Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden, as well as UNHCR and several non-governmental organisations from each of the Nordic countries. The Government of Iceland was unable to attend. Also in attendance as observers were representatives from the Governments of Australia, Canada, and the United States of America. Several presentations were given throughout the meeting, including one on "Resettlement in the Context of International Migration" by Dr. Demetri Papademetriou, Director of the Migration Policy Institute, USA, as guest speaker.

2. The meeting split into three working groups on the first day and two working groups on the second day. Their discussions focused on the following issues:

- Enhancing protection and asylum through resettlement, new models of cooperation keeping in mind resource constraints, flexibility in utilizing quotas, and moving towards group or category identification of resettlement cases.
- Resettlement as a responsibility-sharing mechanism, responsiveness of states in emergency situations, exclusion clauses, misuse, fraud and other abuses.
- Resettlement in a migration context, including human smuggling issues
- Enhancing cooperative interlinkages on resettlement and integration, including building protection capacity.
- Facilitating refugee participation and developing leadership opportunities, including involvement of host communities.

3. These discussions took account of the perspectives of States, NGOs, UNHCR, and refugees, as well as implications for each of these actors.

II. CONCLUSIONS

4. The following recommendations/conclusions were adopted by the meeting. They are addressed to the Global Consultations on International Protection as ways of exploring an expanded use of resettlement:

- (i) The enhancement of resettlement requires the continuing co-operation between UNHCR, States and Non-Government Organisations, and the ongoing search for creative solutions to address impediments to the realisation of resettlement goals.

Developing a strategy for enhancing protection through resettlement

- (ii) Resettlement is a protection tool, a durable solution in particular circumstances within a broader strategic framework for protection, and part of an international solidarity and responsibility sharing mechanism. Resettlement is a complement to and not a substitute for the right to seek asylum.
- (iii) Protection should be enhanced through an expanded number of countries engaged in resettlement, and a more strategic use of resettlement, which would enhance protection for as many refugees as possible, taking into account the resource implications involved.
- (iv) In order to achieve this aim a strategy on how to better utilise resettlement within a broader protection framework needs to be developed. The strategy should not only outline the role of resettlement more generally, but also outline its role adapted to evolving stages of existing and new refugee situations and needs (e.g. mass influx, protracted refugee situations).
- (v) Lessons learned in building the resettlement and protection capacities of emerging resettlement countries should be systematically used and methodologies further developed in order to enlist new resettlement countries and to ensure their continuous engagement (e.g. in terms of capacity-building and joint selection missions, including consideration of “twinning partnerships”). As part of this objective to increase the number of resettlement countries, situation-specific resettlement models could be examined.

Resource constraints

- (vi) Creative solutions to the resource constraints faced by UNHCR need to be put in place to compensate for the funding short-fall, including secondments to UNHCR of suitably qualified staff from States and NGOs. In order to expand resettlement, more resources need to be allocated to UNHCR at headquarters and in the field.

Flexibility in utilising quotas; responsiveness of states in emergency situations

- (vii) States are encouraged to continue to explore ways of harmonising resettlement policies and criteria in order to ensure the equitable treatment of refugees, more efficient processing, the avoidance of duplication, and the better use of valuable and scarce resources.
- (viii) In order to more flexibly utilise resettlement quotas, broad protection-based criteria should be used. States should avoid restrictions on resettlement places, for example based on ethnic or national origin, religion, country of origin, country of first asylum, integration potential, and/or family size. This does not preclude States from including a limited number of resource persons among groups of resettled refugees.

Application of the exclusion clauses

- (ix) In the resettlement context, UNHCR shall continue to ensure that the possible application of the exclusion clauses under Article 1F of the Refugee Convention is considered as part of the refugee status determination process. Excluding certain categories of refugees on the basis of their religion or ethnic or national origin from resettlement, without undertaking individual determinations, is not justified.

Misuse, fraud and other abuses

(x) UNHCR should take all possible efforts to ensure the integrity of the processing of the resettlement caseload, in order to avoid inducements to misuse, fraud and other abuses. States should support the efforts taken by UNHCR to address fraud issues, and to bring responsible persons to justice.

Resettlement in a migration context

(xi) While recognising that resettlement is not a migration management tool, one corollary effect of resettlement can be that resettled refugees sometimes satisfy migration needs. Resettlement criteria must remain focused on the protection needs of refugees, and not on migration needs or migration criteria of particular countries.

(xii) Comprehensive migration policies including enhanced access to asylum procedures and greater resettlement possibilities can mitigate the problem of smuggling of refugees.

Enhancing co-operative linkages on resettlement and integration

(xiii) In furtherance of objectives of Executive Committee Conclusion No. 90, specifically paragraph (l), it is recognized that while protection-oriented resettlement criteria must clearly take precedence over integration considerations in accepting refugees for resettlement, capacity-building to enhance integration in resettlement countries must be improved. It is further recognized that strengthening resettlement and integration capacities and protection measures should include a broader range of actors and civil society in the widest sense. States welcome the upcoming Reception and Integration Handbook.

Facilitating refugee participation and developing leadership opportunities

(xiv) States should, in cooperation with civil society, facilitate the active participation and involvement in decision-making processes, of resettled refugees and also develop refugee leadership opportunities, in order to assist resettled refugees to better cope during the transition phase. Refugee and immigrant networks as well as local communities should be involved in this process. States should look to best practices in order to develop models and programmes in this regard.