

**Standing Committee of the Executive Committee of the high Commissioner's
Programme (68th Meeting), 14 – 16 March 2017**

**Presentation of Conference Room Paper: Resilience and Self-Reliance from a
protection and solutions perspective**

Introductory remarks by DIP Director Carol Batchelor

Mr. [Madam?] Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates,

We welcome this opportunity to introduce the Conference Room Paper on Resilience and Self-Reliance from a Protection and Solutions Perspective.

International support for inclusive resilience and self-reliance interventions contributes to the capacity of States to advance comprehensive, protection-centred responses to forced displacement. Resilience and self-reliance programming also bolsters the ability of people of concern to UNHCR to live independent and stable lives, when they find durable solutions to their displacement.

In UNHCR's work with States and other partners, we refer to **self-reliance** as the ability of individuals, households and communities to meet essential needs and to enjoy their human rights in a sustainable manner. Self-reliance goes beyond the economic to include: legal empowerment, access to education, and participation in decision-making processes, among other elements. Self-reliance is an essential feature of a dignified life and one that refugees sacrifice much to attain.

Similarly, we refer to **resilience** as the ability of individuals, households, communities, national institutions and systems to prevent, absorb and recover from shocks, while continuing to function. Resilience requires the adaptation of systems and structures to support long-term prospects for sustainable development, peace and security, and the general enjoyment of human rights. Resilience is about flexibility and the ability to manage unforeseen situations.

Surviving flight, moving families and rebuilding communities, and actually finding a solution to displacement requires an enormous amount of resilience. A similar capacity is required from host communities to adjust to newcomers and help find creative solutions. In Ethiopia, UNHCR - together with the national authorities and other partners - is developing a joint programme to support local conflict resolution and community-based policing capacity. The goal is to help address community

security, justice and social cohesion in both refugee and host communities, in a way that makes use of and reinforces Ethiopian legal and local administrative structures.

Both self-reliance and resilience approaches build upon the resources and capacities of individuals, communities and States. Supported by broader humanitarian, peacebuilding, human rights and development efforts, they can advance the commitments made by States in the New York Declaration, which reinforces the importance of State leadership and national systems in protecting rights and in responding to forced displacement. The transition of Sudanese refugees into the Chadian national education system is a strong example of State commitment in a critical area of resilience building. It illustrates how the inclusion of refugees in national education sector plans enhanced the quality of and access to education, including through easier access to post-primary opportunities for refugees and through the expansion in qualified Arabic language teaching force benefitting local children. The transition also provided a more conducive environment for creating the conditions for social cohesion between the refugee and host communities.

As such, support to self-reliance and resilience fits squarely within a comprehensive approach to solutions, which recognises that neither voluntary return nor legal settlement elsewhere will be a durable solution without the enjoyment of rights and related services in their inter-related legal, socio-cultural, civil-political and economic dimensions. It is in this spirit that UNHCR is engaging more in the joint analysis demanded by National Development Planning, UNDAF and other processes, aiming in part to amplify the voices of persons of concern to UNHCR during consultations on national and local priorities before, during and after displacement. Collaboration with MINUSCA and UNDP on including IDPs in the Central African Republic, as well as refugees from CAR in surrounding countries in a planned Justice, Peace, Security Perception Survey, will ensure that planning for rule of law and governance interventions in the Central African Republic will include the perspectives and priorities of persons of concern to UNHCR currently in CAR and in neighbouring countries.

The complex and often protracted nature of forced displacement today requires better coordinated and targeted efforts to ensure that responses to new crises and investments in long-standing forced displacements are designed with sustainability in mind, and to foster self-reliance and resilience from the outset. Uganda provides a model for a State response that lays the foundations for resilient and self-reliant communities, not only in respect to refugees who have been hosted for many years, but also in the response to the refugees arriving every day from South Sudan, with the Government of Uganda pledging to continue its settlement

approach for the new arrivals. The right to work for refugees in Uganda provides them with the potential to be self-reliant and succeed in re-building their lives upon their eventual return home or establishment elsewhere while also contributing to the larger society they are part of.

Legal aid and awareness-raising programmes underpin self-reliance and resilience efforts. The aim of these programmes is to help forcibly displaced, as well as returnees and stateless populations, to understand their rights and how to access administrative and legal services. They also support national institutions to ensure inclusion of populations of concern in services such as civil registration processes, land restitution schemes, SGBV response mechanisms and access to asylum procedures. For instance, in south-eastern Myanmar UNHCR supported legal counselling for refugee and IDP returnees to help them through the administrative processes for reclaiming and registering their land. UNHCR supported land registration for returnees in 6 villages, which benefitted a total of almost 3,000 people and resulted in the registration of 900 plots of land.

The evidence generated from resilience programming in support of communities coping with natural disasters is instructive in terms of how resilience approaches can be employed in other types of crises, including forced displacement. While UNHCR, of course, has its contribution to make in this regard, through support for comprehensive emergency planning, contributions to nationally-led responses, and joining with an expanded set of partners to help refugees and others of concern to equip themselves for secure futures, we look to self-reliance and resilience partners at the national and global levels to consider the use of resilience approaches to better support States to address the consequences of forced displacement. Indeed, failing to include the consequences of forced displacement as an element of broader resilience programming may negatively impact on the results of such programming.

When planning for and faced with large-scale displacement, national and local institutions often require reinforcement and adjustment to maintain, and if necessary enhance, levels of support, services and protection for all residents of hosting, settlement and return areas. This support is at the core of the NY Declaration commitments: the international community needs to be more predictable in its support for national systems. Self-reliance and resilience interventions can help strengthen the ability of governments and civil society to mobilize capacities and resources to improve protection of and solutions for displaced persons. UNHCR encourages other partners who are already working on different aspects of self-reliance and development, to also support improvements in the lives of persons of concern and their hosting communities.

To this end, UNHCR and ILO have updated their MoU in 2016, setting out areas of collaboration for the future. As is articulated in the *Guiding Principles on the access of refugees and other displaced persons to labour markets* agreed last November at the ILO, exercising the right to decent work requires the achievement of goals that go beyond merely granting work permits. UNHCR is now working more closely with the ILO and others to identify where international cooperation can support job creation, infrastructure development and other key components of a holistic economic policy. We are not the leaders in these areas but we understand that as the UN's refugee agency, we need to bring others to the table to address those areas of development that can support improvements in the lives of all persons of concern to UNHCR and the communities that host them.

Self-reliance and resilience actors stress the medium and long term nature of programmes in these areas – from preparedness to sustainable approaches being employed from the outset. UNHCR is listening and making institutional changes in its approach to planning through the development of Multi Year Multi Partner protection and solutions strategies at the country level that will better situate us to work with these actors. We appreciate the support that this Committee has already given to this direction.

I would like to now hand over to my colleague, Steven Corliss, Director of the Division of Programme Support and Management, who will touch on the role of UNHCR with a wide array of partners in supporting resilience and self-reliance.

Thank you