

Canadian Government Delegation
Interventions, as delivered, for the third round of the
Formal Consultations on the Global Compact on Refugees
Geneva, April 10-11, 2018

Agenda item 1: Reception and Admission

We thank UNHCR for the efforts undertaken to convene all of us for this third formal consultation on the draft Global Compact. The Canadian delegation notes that Part III.B is a pivotal section of the Compact, as it sets out the contributions that are key to effectively applying the CRRF and increasing responsibility-sharing through an improved and more comprehensive approach to refugee response. Canada firmly believes that these approaches and actions can only be advanced through multi-stakeholder efforts and stronger cooperation across the international community.

We are pleased to see that the sub-section on preparedness, contingency planning and early warning has been further developed in this first draft, as such measures can play a critical role in mitigating human suffering and generating significant savings in the long-term. This section could be strengthened by including means to foster increased and coordinated support from the wide range of stakeholders that could have particular added value in this area, such as development actors, private sector actors, and civil society.

We are also pleased by the language on registration and documentation, as documents which confirm civil status, land ownership, and educational credentials can play a critical role not only in the initial response, but also in facilitating solutions and supporting self-reliance.

We are supportive in principle of UNHCR establishing an asylum capacity support group, particularly in expanding opportunities for refugee protection. As with the various mechanisms for responsibility- and burden-sharing outlined in Part A, we would be interested in, as other delegations have requested, further clarity on how this group will function and how it builds on similar initiatives.

Finally, in relation to the identification of international protection needs, we encourage UNHCR to work towards complementarity with the Global Compact for Migration and to avoid potential gaps. Together, the Compacts should seek to ensure coherence in a way that guarantees the right to seek asylum, meets protection needs in line with international obligations, and safeguards the human rights of all people on the move.

Agenda item 2: Meeting Needs and Supporting Communities

We welcome the improvements that have been made to this section of the text. A more comprehensive approach to meeting needs and supporting communities is in the interests of refugees, host countries, countries of origin, and the wider international community. Fostering the self-reliance of refugees and enhancing their skills and access to quality education is an investment in solutions, including sustainable voluntary return, as well as durable peace and stability within a region. Supporting inclusive national and municipal basic services, rather than setting up parallel structures, allows resources in relation to refugee flows to be channeled into infrastructure and systems benefitting host communities as well as refugees.

Colleagues, lack of attention to sexual and reproductive health and rights is a driver for maternal mortality, poor health and disenfranchisement for women and girls. Furthermore, high levels of sexual and gender-based violence and early and forced childhood marriages are a reality for many refugees before, during and after flight. With this in mind, we would recommend that the sub-section on health include a reference to resources, education and expertise being channelled to define and support a basic package of health services that includes sexual and reproductive health-care services, as well as maternal and infant health. A reference to the Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP) could also be included. Canada strongly believes in the importance of this addition which would be fully aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 5.6.

To ensure that comprehensive refugee responses are truly multi-stakeholder efforts, we would also recommend that UNHCR include a section on partnerships, particularly recognizing the importance of meaningful partnerships and support for local responders, the particular capacities of the Red Cross and Red Crescent society within refugee responses, and the importance of engagement and contributions from across the UN system and from non-governmental organizations.

Finally, we would like to recognize and firmly support the improvements that have been made to the section on gender, in line with recommendations made in previous rounds. We strongly believe that the international community must better recognize and address the specific needs and risks faced by women and children in displacement crises and work harder to involve them and strengthen their agency. Doing so is a human rights imperative and will also dramatically improve development outcomes for refugees, host communities and ultimately countries of origin.

Agenda item 3: Solutions

We welcome the improvements to the section on solutions, which we feel now better recognizes the three traditional durable solutions of voluntary repatriation, local integration, and resettlement. We recall that the pursuit of local integration or resettlement remains a sovereign decision and an option to be exercised by States, consistent with international norms and obligations, and that countries of origin have an important responsibility in enabling the conditions for voluntary repatriation. We are pleased to see these considerations reflected in the text. Additionally, we recommend that the text affirm the importance of a human rights-centred approach in the advance of all durable solutions, and that gender, age and diversity considerations be more actively included in the Solutions section. We will follow-up with specific written recommendations in this regard.

We are pleased that the paragraphs on resettlement are now better aligned with the commitments contained in the New York Declaration, including the stated aim to provide resettlement places and other pathways for admission on a scale that would enable the annual resettlement needs identified by UNHCR to be met. In line with the New York Declaration, we recommend that this section also encourage States to incorporate a non-discriminatory and gender-sensitive approach in establishing or expanding resettlement programs.

Canada supports the proposal to develop a three year strategy to enlarge the pool of resettlement states and stands ready to consider how we may be best placed to contribute resources and technical expertise, including through the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative. We also support the call for multi-year resettlement commitments as well as the timely and strategic use of resettlement in both existing and emerging refugee situations.

While Canada remains supportive, in principle, of the mechanisms for burden- and responsibility-sharing proposed in Part A, we would encourage UNHCR to align any new mechanisms with the existing multilateral resettlement architecture, such as core groups, with a view to ensuring the added value of these initiatives.

Finally, we recommend that the text include reference to the need for more comprehensive and disaggregated reporting on resettlement and other pathways for admission to third countries, in a way that provides an accurate account and proper measurement of the impact of different programs. This reporting should integrate statistics concerning cases referred by UNHCR as well as those resettled via other means and without a referral by the Agency.