

**72<sup>nd</sup> session of the Standing Committee**  
**Agenda item 4: Update on the comprehensive refugee response framework**  
20 June 2018

*Madame Chair, Excellencies, distinguished delegates,*

It has been three months since we last met to review progress in the practical application of the comprehensive refugee response framework. I appreciate this opportunity to be with you again today, to present the conference room paper before you.

Before we begin our discussion, let me share a few preliminary remarks.

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***Today we are just 21 months and 1 day since*** the unanimous adoption of the New York Declaration by heads of state and government ...

*... since member States -- informed by decades of experience, trials and errors; informed by decades of learning across continents -- committed themselves* to pursuing comprehensive responses to large-scale refugee movements, and to do so through more equitable and predictable burden- and responsibility- sharing, and

*... since member States provided* a clear, concise, and carefully-considered framework to guide and inform the development of comprehensive responses.

Member States committed to applying this framework – ***the CRRF*** – with four clear objectives in mind:

- easing pressures on host countries involved;
- enhancing refugee self-reliance;
- expanding refugees' access to third-country solutions; and
- supporting conditions conducive to safe and dignified return to countries of origin.

And UNHCR was requested to develop and initiate the framework, in close coordination with member States and through a multi-stakeholder approach.

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***So, where do we find ourselves, 21 months in?***

Today, the CRRF is being formally applied by 14 States. Let me recognize these pioneers. They are Belize, Chad, Costa Rica, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Honduras, Kenya, Mexico, Panama, Rwanda, Somalia, Uganda and Zambia.

Eleven of these 14 are also collaborating on regional comprehensive responses. Four countries of asylum have joined the country of origin in pursuing a comprehensive regional response to the Somali refugee situation. And 5 Central American countries and Mexico are pursuing a regional strategy to enable protection and solutions in response to complex and fluid dynamics driving displacement within their region, a strategy known as the MIRPS.

In each meeting of this Committee, we have updated you on progress toward these objectives, and in the partnerships needed to pursue them. ***UNHCR has recognized these four objectives as interrelated and inseparable. Let me stress this point.*** We have called for equal vigour – as many of you say, ***equal enthusiasm*** – in their collective pursuit. We recognize that progress toward one cannot be sustained without progress toward all, even as we recognize that the pace of their realization may not be identical.

Yesterday you heard from the Assistant High Commissioner for Protection about concrete progress being made in these contexts, as well as globally. The Note on International Protection also presented key developments in the frame of the CRRF, while additional elements were included in the agenda item on solutions. And, I am pleased to invite you to a special event during the break today on the multi-stakeholder approach of the comprehensive response in Central America.

So in my remarks, I would like to focus on two things.

**First, to share with you a handful of key lessons** that are emerging from our experience with the comprehensive refugee response framework to date, and which have informed the development of the global compact on refugees.

**Second, to explore how these emerging lessons are being realized** in one of the most important areas of engagement for the future of refugees and our societies.

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First, the lessons.

Taken collectively, these lessons show real momentum and change. Change in the way we think about a comprehensive response; in the ways that we organize ourselves; and, as the Assistant High Commissioner said “in ways of working to ensure better and more sustained support for countries hosting refugees arriving *en masse* or living in protracted situations.”

**Lesson 1: The CRRF has proven itself to be relevant and adaptable to a range of contexts.**

The text itself emphasizes that its application must be context-specific. There is no “one-size-fits-all.” Think about the 14 countries applying the CRRF today, and the diversity of their social and economic contexts; their legal and policy frameworks; their operational contexts, whether emergency, protracted, or a mix of the two; and their challenges and aspirations, for their own societies and the refugees they have welcomed.

Yet each country and sub-region has found the framework to be flexible and conducive to its own situation.

**The second lesson enables everything that follows. In particular: comprehensive responses begin with and build from strong government leadership.**

Political will and leadership have been demonstrated in many ways, starting with the decision to apply the CRRF, and including the many progressive commitments to inclusive policies that provided the foundation for a comprehensive response. Moving forward, countries applying the CRRF have enabled better leadership by expanding it through a “whole-of-government” approach. This means bringing into the strategic development and decision-making process the wide range of governmental actors – from line ministries to local and district authorities – who see and feel the effects of large movements, and who can, importantly, help to shape a stronger and more resilient response.

**Third: The national arrangements determined by the leading government have been instrumental in fostering a broader base of understanding, engagement and support.**

It matters less what these arrangements are called; or whether they are created new, or build from existing functional mechanisms. What matters is that these strategic governance bodies have broadened the base of inclusion to engage the *whole range of stakeholders envisioned* in a comprehensive response. National arrangements today include not just the refugee-responsible government agency, UNHCR and other humanitarian actors. They encompass multilateral and bilateral development actors, the private sector, civil society, *and members of refugee and host communities*. With their broad and diverse memberships, these bodies are developing a *shared understanding and a common vision to underpin a comprehensive response*.

**In turn, a more diverse range of actors *than ever before* are beginning to realize their own pragmatic relevance to refugee responses, in diverse areas of expertise. This is the fourth lesson.**

ILO, the International Chamber of Commerce, WHO, the UN Capital Development Fund, GAVI, United World Colleges to mention just a few. More remains to be done; many more opportunities to seize at local and global levels. But there is real momentum, in large part generated by the strength of the New York Declaration.

**Government leadership has also been instrumental in shaping the development agenda toward greater inclusion. This is the fifth lesson.**

Where governments have chosen to include refugees in national services and systems, this has facilitated the engagement of development actors to support national systems *for the benefit of hosts and refugees alike*. In the context of the 2030 Agenda and the African Union's Agenda 2063, more governments are including refugees in national and district development planning frameworks. The World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank and the African Development Bank are all supporting these efforts in various ways, as are bilateral actors. Following the government's lead, the UN system is also cooperating to ensure that our development assistance frameworks (UNDAFs) are appropriately aligned. In collaboration with national governments, DOCO, UNDG and development partners, we are actively looking at how best to support this work.

**The sixth and final lesson is the value of regional responses, initiated by governments and supported by regional organizations.**

The Nairobi Declaration and Plan of Action for Somali Refugees and Returnees and the MIRPS have provided an important basis for collaboration in the development of regional frameworks and plans of action; for the harmonization of policies and exchange of practices; and subsequently, for support and follow-up.

We welcome recent action by the Organisation of American States to recognize the MIRPS as a "dynamic, pioneering sub-regional application of the CRRF" and support its annual review and further development. Under the auspices of IGAD, and with core group members the European Union, UNDP, the World Bank and UNHCR, the first annual ministerial meeting on the Nairobi Declaration reviewed progress to date. Notably, this included the adoption of the Djibouti Declaration on Refugee Education in December 2017, where member States agreed to ensure that "every refugee, returnee and member of host communities have access to quality education in a safe learning environment . . . without discrimination." Just last month, the first follow-up meeting of government experts, supported by major education actors including UNICEF and UNESCO, agreed upon priority actions for the inclusion of refugees in national education systems, the establishment of minimum standards and targets, and regional recognition of educational qualifications. As work in this area continues, a second thematic meeting on work and livelihoods will take place later this year.

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Now, let's explore how these emerging lessons are being realized in one specific sector: education.

In the New York Declaration, member States expressed their determination *to provide quality primary and secondary education*, in safe learning environments, to all refugee children. They also committed to support host countries, and to benefit host communities, while doing so.

***Today the majority of refugees under UNHCR's mandate are under the age of 18.*** More than half are in protracted displacement. These are years that these children should be in school, developing the capacities that will enable them to contribute to the societies in which they live, when allowed to do so, and preparing more effectively for a future in which they may return home, resettle, or integrate locally. Yet in lower-income countries fewer than 1 in 2 refugee children is in school. The global average – in all countries – is only 61%.

**So is fair to ask: can a comprehensive response make a difference? Let me tell you what we are seeing, though the prism of these lessons.**

Twelve of the fourteen countries applying the CRRF today made significant commitments relating to education, either at the Leaders' Summit for Refugees or in one of the regional comprehensive responses. The commitments vary. In Djibouti, a change in law was required – and already achieved – to enable access to national curricula, national services and recognition of equivalency. Uganda committed to maintaining access to national services – even as it became the largest host country in Africa – and it has done so. Rwanda, Chad and Ethiopia all committed to significantly enhance enrolments, while among Central American countries, pledges address effective access education, regardless of status, through practical measures such as the recognition of credentials, the issuance of needed documentation, and the provision of safe educational spaces.

Countries have taken these commitments forward in their national plans. The participation of ministries of education in national coordination arrangements, and the inclusion of refugees in national development frameworks, have helped partners to prioritize education. Kenya, Uganda and Djibouti, for example, have developed education response plans or refugee inclusion policies. In Ethiopia, **an additional 35,000 refugee children are now enrolled in primary school**, with further enrolments across all educational levels. Mexico has eased requirements of documentation from the country of origin so that asylum-seekers can attend school.

The Global Platform on Education, Education Cannot Wait, and the Educate a Child Initiative are all providing critical support to lower-income countries and countries affected by crisis, including countries applying the CRRF, while UNICEF and UNESCO are supporting quality education. In Central America, cooperating States and regional organizations made significant commitments to support education. The IDA18 sub-window for refugees and host communities is also providing grants and concessional finance to support national education systems.

The support of regional responses, especially IGAD, was mentioned earlier. *At the global policy level, the inclusion of refugees in SDG4 and its follow-up at regional and sub-regional levels illustrates how the pursuit of comprehensive refugee responses and the SDG agenda mutually reinforcing.* Most recently, in April, the Pan-African Conference on Education (PACE) as the African ministers of education adopt the Nairobi Declaration and Call for Action on Education, where they specifically committed to “making our educational systems more responsive, flexible and resilient to include refugees and internally displaced people, and increasing investment for education in emergencies and crises.”

These are vitally important beginnings – having a direct, real and positive effect for refugee and host community children today. They warrant our redoubled efforts and additional, predictable and continuing support.

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*Of course, for each of these lessons, there have been challenges along the way*, and the lessons that they impart. For example:

- The specificity of each response means that we must take each context at its own starting point.
- Government leadership also requires protection, resilience and solutions-positive policies.
- National arrangements or facilitation mechanisms must balance inclusivity with efficiency.
- Working with a greater diversity and number of actors takes time and resources, to develop understanding and ensure complementarity, and
- Enabling conditions conducive to voluntary and sustainable return to countries of origin requires a greater engagement of peace, security, humanitarian and development actors.

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In closing, let me recognize: first, the leadership of countries applying the CRRF; second, the commitment, and contribution, of such a range of partners, both long-standing and new; and finally, the imperative of the work before us.

With your support and engagement, these emerging lessons are contributing to the development of the global compact on refugees.

Thank you.