



MSF Statement to UNHCR High Commissioner's Dialogue 12 December 2017

Thank you for the opportunity. Among the range of issues under discussion here today we ask that two simple imperatives remain at the centre of the forthcoming Global Compact and 'Programme of Action':

FIRST, the provision of minimum standards of basic, lifesaving services requires renewed and urgent investment. The historic magnitude of the issues we face should be a call to action, not an excuse to tolerate sub-standard provision of services including water, shelter, sanitation, food, quality medical care and insufficient protection during refugee emergencies.

Humanitarian action may not be a solution but it is the first and often most urgent right of refugees, and my friends we are still not meeting this lowest of bars. From Bangladesh to Libya and even Uganda, basic emergency services remain insufficient and inadequate, and lives lost as a result will not contribute to sustainable solutions.

MSF recognises the desire to develop new ways of working between humanitarian and development sectors, and to prioritise technical support and resourcing for local actors. We are supportive of any measure that improves services to refugee and host communities, and ourselves work closely ground local organisations on the ground in many contexts.

From this experience however we know that such measures are often not enough. In many cases refugee relief operations cannot be managed remotely or by 'capacity building' support alone. While governments are accountable to their national publics, refugees need responders to commit 'boots on the ground' accountable to their needs, in the communities, camps, settlements and transit centres along the entire route of migration, and at a scale commensurate with need.

We therefore ask that the programme of action include the commitment, resources and concrete mechanisms necessary to strengthen operational presence and service delivery in refugee crises, alongside accountability to refugee populations and to ensure delivery according minimum standards, as a first and independent imperative.

Our **SECOND** position is well known, and has been repeated time and again, including in the immediate context of the New York Declaration itself.

Burden-sharing implies responsibility-sharing. Countries doing so must STOP outsourcing or 'offshoring' their responsibilities under the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol. From Libya to Manus Island the results of such near-sighted political choices are devastating, most immediately for refugees we are treating every day, but also for the international, domestic and moral standing of States themselves.

The outrage expressed as recently as this past week by ministries, heads of state and the UN Security Council following reports on long-known abuses in Libya must now be accompanied by acknowledgement that such circumstances are not isolated but systemic, and the short-term choices of governments seeking to control the movement of refugees are causing them.

Unimpeded and unconditional access must be granted to humanitarian assistance, the right to seek asylum must be respected, and safe and legal channels must replace the abuses of the status quo. Just solutions may be difficult to come-by, but failure cannot be an option. History will judge these choices in the context of the mandate of the New York declaration and the states and organisations present here in this room - we beseech you not to let this opportunity pass.

Thank you.