

Participants' Evaluation of the 2007 Annual Consultations with NGOs

This evaluation is based on the response of 61 participants, which represents 19% of the 324 participants. The findings can be considered representative, although not conclusive.

As with previous years, the overall rating for the Annual Consultations with NGOs was good. The CICG venue was found more conducive to networking and access to the meetings, vis-à-vis security, was much easier. The structure and quality of the sessions was considered generally good; however comments are varied showing that some sessions were very good whilst others were poor. Lack of time continues to be a negative point due to poor moderation and long presentations. One participant commented that "speakers tried to talk too much about the statements and the policy without knowing the real life or not having an overview of the topic, just showing an ideal world". The role of moderator is key – "some moderators merely introduced presenters; others viewed their roles as more substantive. Obviously, the latter category of moderator contributed to a more meaningful session". The venue was not found conducive to a round-table setting, which limited debate to just questions and answers.

Comments on the Regional Sessions vary from "too broad, no agenda" to "very informative and allowed a quite good exchange of views". In general, participants found the exchange between UNHCR and NGOs working in the region very useful and could relate to the situation. Some NGOs would have liked to discuss the regional strategy for next year.

The agenda was found good but too general. It was recognised that meeting the needs of such a diverse audience is challenging. One participant suggested having separate events for rights-based and humanitarian implementing partners. Although the event provides a great opportunity for networking, participants found the agenda too tight and therefore limited the time for meeting people. Lunch was found to be particularly 'painful' to skip. Suggestions include bigger badges, mobile name plates, starting earlier, longer breaks, exhibition space and sharing the 'NGO Profile in Brief' booklet ahead of time. The idea of regional Pre-ExCom sessions was favourable and a good way to include more national NGOs in discussions. Some suggested having Pre-ExCom earlier in order to have a better impact on ExCom. More guidance needed on preparing the sessions and how to interact at Pre-ExCom, especially for newcomers. Participants also commented on follow-up to the Pre-ExCom conclusions/recommendations.

The table below provides some indication of the degree of satisfaction of the 2007 Annual Consultations with NGOs.

| Rating: 1 = very poor; 2 = poor; 3 = good; 4 = very good | Structure | | | | | Usefulness | | | | |
|---|-----------|---|----|----|-------|------------|----|----|----|-------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Avge. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Avge. |
| Agenda | | 5 | 27 | 22 | 3.3 | | 7 | 29 | 19 | 3.2 |
| Overall quality of the round-tables you attended | | 4 | 37 | 11 | 3.1 | 1 | 6 | 29 | 18 | 3.2 |
| Overall quality of the regional sessions you attended | | 7 | 28 | 15 | 3.2 | | 13 | 19 | 18 | 3.1 |
| Overall quality of the plenary sessions | | 6 | 30 | 15 | 3.2 | | 11 | 25 | 22 | 3.2 |
| Venue at CICG | | 1 | 18 | 35 | 3.6 | | | 12 | 33 | 3.7 |
| Venue At the Palais des Nations | | 4 | 31 | 17 | 3.3 | | 5 | 24 | 16 | 3.2 |
| Side meetings | | 5 | 24 | 18 | 3.3 | | 4 | 23 | 21 | 3.4 |
| Opportunity to network | 1 | 6 | 21 | 25 | 3.3 | 1 | 4 | 15 | 29 | 3.5 |
| Overall organization of the Annual Consultations | | 4 | 22 | 27 | 3.4 | | 5 | 19 | 28 | 3.4 |

Further below are comments on the working and regional sessions, as well as general comments on the Annual Consultations with NGOs and recommendations for 2008. Comments are in the participants own words.

Orientation Session

- ❖ The introduction ICVA session lacked focus. Would have been better to have 30 minutes orientation and then time for NGOs to meet together. Comments about carbon footprint were offensive. NGOs value and need access HQs. Many save to attend. There is no other comparable activity.
- ❖ Comments at introduction session about NGO statement were too obsessed with process and gave us suggested that there was no opportunity to amend. Is there any real need to be so inflexible? (and possibly misleading) Not really helpful to have group introduction when there are so many delegate.

Round-table Sessions

- ❖ Excellent content, great speakers. In sufficient time for NGOs to raise issues of new emerging and critical concerns. There was great expertise amongst the NGO community, would have been great to have opportunity to engage more with community and have opportunity to learn.
- ❖ Excellent examples from the field.
- ❖ It was useful having clear underlying themes to this meeting, namely partnership and accountability. However, some of the sessions were very broad and I was not sure that they had achieved their purpose outlined in the agenda. This may be because UNHCR has such a broad remit of partners with very different agendas.
- ❖ Think they have been made even more useful had we been able to move into the more intricate issues.
- ❖ Boring, too vague, not related to refugees and IDP; please make one or two items operationally relevant.
- ❖ Very useful. It allowed sharing of experience from the field from different countries, need more sessions.
- ❖ Same topics, same questions, same answers.
- ❖ On the resettlement round-table, there were too many on the panel so there was not enough time for discussion and questions. Roundtable on partnership working was hard to follow and not very concrete.
- ❖ Useful, still not enough time for interaction.
- ❖ Les tables ont fait bonne presse, mais au premier jour les participants ont pris du retard pour s'adapter.
- ❖ Best round tables were those again which had fewer or shorter speakers and more questions.
- ❖ I wish some had more time to talk. For my own presentation, 10 minutes was too short. Sometimes too many scheduled at once, so different to go to necessary ones. Less talking about statute and more specific operational issues.

- ❖ The discussion on enhancing the effectiveness of the annual consultation is a timely one. We look forward to exchange on this issue in the coming months, exchange on the issue of the agenda which has to be focused, the timing of the consultation, etc.
- ❖ The quality of round table sessions I have attended was high. We have got the opportunity to share the experience as well to raise the urgent problems.
- ❖ The round-table sessions were very useful but time allocated was limited.
- ❖ Discussions were quite general with little opportunity to discuss the details of the problems on the ground, but very stimulating all the same.
- ❖ I found the meetings I went to very useful and interesting. One major problem I had was the clashes of meetings. I missed a couple of meetings I would have liked to attend in person but had to choose another meeting at the same time. Could the minutes/notes/presentations of such meetings be made available online (this is better than in print form for those of us who must report back to our colleagues who did not attend the meetings) to allow all to be able to make up for the meetings they miss?
- ❖ It was good interaction, for me this is the first time I have attended, learned a lot. I hope next time there will be announcement of the location of the meetings although the screen was showing the room it would be good if announcement is made frequently of change place or actual venue.
- ❖ The round table sessions attended were very informative. It provided a forum to interact, share and discuss experiences, situations from country level perspective.
- ❖ I assisted to round table sessions. I found it quite direct in the exchange and rich in the content. You could easily feel that people attending the session were well prepared to discuss the issue, while the kind of the questions asked were professional and competent.
- ❖ The initial notice/invitation to organize a round table was good in terms of timing. However we were not clear as to why we were selected to organize the round table with another NGO. This was a first for us and we were really pleased to receive this privilege. Nonetheless we were unclear about UNHCR's rationale and therefore how best to respond. Hence a simple explanation for the invitation to organize the round table would be helpful.
- ❖ The moderator's task of note-taking is not a simple one, especially since it is meant to be captured in the Consultation Rapporteur's summary report. Whereas our moderator did not complain, we are concerned that the summary reports do not reflect our round table's list of recommendations. Would it be helpful for the organizers to have a draft summary and recommendations before the panel presentation that can be later altered if needed, to ensure the Consultation Rapporteur has at the earliest point, a succinct but comprehensive overview of the roundtables?
- ❖ I found the round table sessions very informative in getting into operational aspects of refugee protection, excellent speakers who are well-informed. The formality of the room set up, however, and the size of the "audience" makes it difficult for these to actually operate as round tables and were more like panel presentations. The time allotted also sometimes presented a problem in being able to move from the initial presentations to a discussion of the underlying issues, best practices, etc.
- ❖ I find most of the Round-table very useful to my NGO, all of them were nowadays topics. However I think that give more time to all the people to do their inputs and their opinion it could be useful, sometimes the NGO representative can show another or a real view of the topic.

- ❖ Sometimes the speakers tried to talk too much about the statements and the policy without knowing the real life or not having an overview of the topic, just showing an ideal world.
- ❖ I felt the round-table discussions were generally good but the time allotted was always going to be a challenge.
- ❖ On the whole these were well-presented and useful, though there were a few weak presentations. I thought that some of the UNHCR roundtable presentations (and in the Americas session) were candid and honest, making them insightful and useful.
- ❖ These are very important sessions and more preparations have to be made in these meetings. For example in most of the sessions I attended there were not translators.
- ❖ Roundtable was well managed and allows a good discussion. The time is always the limit. This is one of my best Global Consultation; I do not regret my participation.
- ❖ The so-called 'round-table' sessions were not what the label suggested as the sessions seemed more like a conference than a meeting. Round-tables should perhaps be done in smaller groups and in meeting room conditions where spokespersons for various organizations, including UNHCR, should be on level (literally) creating the atmosphere of equality where partners are equal. Rapport with NGO partners is not established or seen to be established, if some of the partners see themselves as possessing a status above others. The impression given was that the UN appeared inclined to exhibit its familiarity with international NGO partners whom they have been dealing with in the past and treating national NGO partners, particularly those attending the Pre-Excom for the first-time, as mere spectators with little to contribute to the discussions.
- ❖ UNHCR did not seem to appreciate that national partners were actually ones in the forefront of refugee work advocating and interacting directly with the refugees in a national political situation that might be favourable or unfavourable to their work. National NGOs are also the ones to deal directly with their own governments and often bear the brunt of any government reaction towards their work, especially in advocating the human rights of refugees. Thus, calling an annual consultation meeting in Geneva seemed merely an expensive formality that NGOs could have saved valuable time and money, not coming to. Hopefully, UNHCR will take this into consideration and alter the structure of the meeting to better reflect a real 'round-table' discussion from which more will be gained by all partners, treated as equals.
- ❖ As these were not 'round-table' meetings by nature, it was also difficult for some NGO partners to give honest views without feeling that they had to play the diplomatic game. By reason of such considerations, having a consultation meeting as partners is totally pointless, when many may go away dissatisfied with the discussions and the feeling that their views had been 'beaten down' instead of considered. Neither UNHCR nor its NGO partners will benefit from such discussions, if the Pre-Excom continues merely to be a talk-shop without concrete resolutions or plan of action agreed upon by both sides, resulting from them. These discussions also failed to take into account views from refugee communities themselves or even provide a space for a refugee voice. This creates the impression that refugees cannot think for themselves and have no aspirations as human beings in their own right. Thus, all solutions were being planned for them without consideration as to what the refugees themselves want.
- ❖ Nonetheless, the sessions were of value as they provided certain insights that indicated the need for improvement in UNHCR-NGO partnership relations and, encouragingly, UNHCR's willingness to welcome improvement and some reform with feedback from their NGO partners.

- ❖ Round tables were uneven. Some were excellent in terms of the interaction of presenters and the overall coherence of the presentations. The session on the refugee status determinations was generally good in terms of coherence and focus with the exception of one presenter. Other sessions lacked the connectedness that might have been hoped for in such sessions. It would appear that the role of the moderator as a commentator who linked presentations was key. Some moderators merely introduced presenters; others viewed their role as more substantive. Obviously, the latter category of moderator contributed to a more meaningful session.
- ❖ The least effective were the ones where panellists were too verbose.

Comments on specific Round tables

Humanitarian reform: Responding to IDP in non-cluster countries

- ❖ Humanitarian reform session not on topic.
- ❖ “Responding to IDP situations in non-cluster countries”: The agenda was well and elaborately discussed, but I feel that the aspect of host governments perpetuating the plight of IDPs was left out. This is particularly the case when IDPs are victims of such political situations such as those in Darfur where their own government is the very cause of their displacement, and such a government looks at the IDPs as its own enemies. This is a situation where issues of protection and other services to be rendered to the IDPs by UNHCR, the NGOs, and other humanitarian agencies including other UN agencies become a real problem. In most cases we find ourselves not doing much to the IDPs in such situations. This is an agenda that demands the attention of the International Community to put pressure on these host governments to live up to their responsibility to protect their own citizens and therefore create a conducive environment for humanitarian agencies to have access to IDPs in such situations. Rebel leaders belonging to ethnic groups or areas where the displaced come should also be made to bear the same pressure as that imposed by the International Community on the host governments.
- ❖ The humanitarian reform panel did not really talk about humanitarian reform, disappointing.
- ❖ Would like to see focus on solutions, joint action plans and next steps’ i.e. more dynamic action-oriented rather than just information sharing.
- ❖ I attended the session on IDPs in non-cluster countries and thought it went well. However, I thought the structure – 4 panellists, each speaking for 7 minutes – didn’t allow for much ‘depth’ in presentations. The Bosnian participants had a wealth of insights, but there just wasn’t time to focus in on them. I don’t know what the answer is by having very short presentations, there was plenty of time for discussion (which is great), but some of the substance was lacking. I had the same reaction to the roundtable on complex emergencies.

How do make ‘Principled’ partnership work?

- ❖ How do we make principled partnership session? The definition of principled partnership is not clear, wrong, discussion with others partners “closes eyes” on relations with other partners and governments.
- ❖ The position of UNHCR on situation of conflict of interest between two partners NGO and government not mentioned.
- ❖ The topic of polarization of UNHCR as others UN agencies was not covered. It links

with concept of principle.

- ❖ Principled partnership informative but could have been extended by having NGO talk about ways they could see then being implemented would have generate energy, commitment.
- ❖ Partnership, good prospects however we have doubts as to how some NGOs can enact the various principles as regards their influence and resources deficit.

How to strengthen and improve partnership?

- ❖ “How to strengthen and improve partnership” – Of the sessions I attended, this was the least effective in furthering my understanding of the issues at stake and connecting it to my work. It also felt the least like a round table of all the sessions I attended.
- ❖ UNHCR, the IPs and other stakeholders discussed and agreed on the ways that would facilitate and improve their partnership. The people receiving the services – the refugees, the returnees and the IDPs, however, should have been represented for them to understand the implications of partnership. Most often criticism come from them about the services rendered, and this has been a source of conflict. It was tentatively suggested that we involve them in the planning of the projects/activities. It is a good idea to a certain extent, but there is still a challenge on how to make it work better because limited funds have always been the cause of inadequate services rendered to these groups.

Toward a conclusion on refugees’ rights associated with self-reliance rights in 2008: A civil society perspective

- ❖ It was interesting to hear about the Global Humanitarian Platform.
- ❖ Next steps in Durable solutions: The objective of the session was not clear. The speakers from Latin America took too much time and were not corrected by the chair. In general 5 speakers is too much for a session and even if they make their points briefly, will not leave enough time for interaction with the ‘public’.

Protection in mixed migration flows

- ❖ Mixed migration panel was excellent, good moderator, lots of information.
- ❖ A very good session. It would be helpful if there could be more dialogue with NGOs re identification of vulnerable groups in migratory flows.
- ❖ Protection on mixed flows. I found this one interesting and informative. A good balance between speakers and interaction with ‘public’.
- ❖ I found the round table on “Mixed Flows” especially useful. As always, I wished I could be in two places at once, especially where the round tables were opposite the regional updates.

Local integration in Africa: lessons learned and the way forward

- ❖ Local Integration in Africa: This agenda had a lot of practical examples, with the most elaborate one from Tanzania. It gave opportunities on how other African countries would implement local integration of refugees whose chances of return to their countries are in the remote future. Unfortunately, most African countries don’t easily buy the idea of local integration in the manner practised in Tanzania. If they do, this has always been marked by opposition either from some politicians or from the citizens of

the country where the refugees are. Governments therefore have to find solutions to most local integration situations because UNHCR and other agencies will help very little in facilitating local integration in Africa. So, governments have to be involved in such discussions.

Creating safe schools and learning environment

- ❖ **Creating Safe Schools and Learning Environment:** This was well discussed, especially with the argument and suggestion that UNHCR should think about providing secondary school education to refugees. Refugees staying longer in camps always lose their opportunity to acquire education before they get repatriated to their countries of origin.

The challenges and opportunities for the delivery of protection and assistance in complex emergencies and operations

- ❖ This session was good. It seemed to be better structured, integrated and moderated than other sessions and there was some interesting debate.
- ❖ I liked the last one on Thursday in which Andrew Harper used power point and all 3 of the humanitarian pillars were represented...UN, NGOs and Red Cross. Good cross fertilization with professional input.

Improving and expanding refugee resettlement

- ❖ Protection should be an explicit theme of every Annual Consultations. As this one was structured, the round-table on self-reliance rights was misleadingly placed under next steps in durable solutions, even though it focused on right relevant regardless of the availability of durable solutions, indeed especially relevant in the absence of near term prospects for durable solutions. More over suggestions that the rights to work and freedom of movement invoke a responsibility to naturalize is counter-productive.
- ❖ Good case studies a model for countries with small number to re-settle, not as opposite to resettlement of very large populations.
- ❖ Focus not quite as useful to some as so few refugees and asylum seekers an actually resettled.
- ❖ “Improving and expanding refugee resettlement” session – I think the proposed outline that juxtaposed specific new resettlement country initiatives with a larger global discussion would have been an excellent way to ground Vincent Cochetel’s discussion items. Unfortunately, there was simply not enough time for all of the speakers to present and have that discussion
- ❖ **Improving and Expanding Refugee Resettlement:** This agenda gave the examples of Argentina and Brazil for other Nations to copy as a model, and this will contribute to the plight of many refugees. So it was a useful session.
- ❖ The session on resettlement, with the experiences of the newer resettlement countries and Vincent Cochetel’s analytical summary, was another highlight.

Regional Sessions

- ❖ They were good but not enough time for questions/debate. Ditto for plenaries, especially one for improving pre-ExCom.
- ❖ I slightly felt that the sessions that I attended that participants were being talked at by

UNHCR who highlighting achievements and challenges of the past year, much of which we could have got from the Annual Report so I didn't feel that I had gone away with as much new information as might I have done.

- ❖ Too broad, no agenda, very poor outcomes, no clear realistic objectives, no result orientated. No time to prepare to allow for strategic outcomes.
- ❖ Good overview of what UNHCR has done over the last year. Perhaps an "outlook" could be added on UNHCR plans for coming year?
- ❖ I would, however cut down on long explanations regarding on the ground operations.
- ❖ I would like these to be much more concrete.
- ❖ Bonne impression des sessions régionales, manque de moyens logistiques appropriés, pas de stylo, pas de bloc notes, bref pas de support pédagogique.
- ❖ I would like to mention about the regional sessions, they were interesting very much. The plenary sessions gave us a lot of interesting ideas and new information. As well relationship with other NGOs will help to develop cooperation between other NGOs. Because I participated on this conference the first time I have got a new view on the global work carried out by UNHCR.
- ❖ Request for views to be discussed was done late. There was limited time for discussion.
- ❖ We do not know how to improve on time allocation to get into further detail with all these important questions.
- ❖ Some were old fashioned ex-cathedra presentations, so that, when the NGOs were asked if they had comments, there was little to say! The more interactive sessions were more useful, even though I personally like to get a good update in the form of a concise report.
- ❖ Whilst they are always interesting, at times the political agendas tend to overshadow the humanitarian/human elements which NGOs are most interested in.
- ❖ Was great to focus regional issues in which I have attend some and got my self in a different meeting which upset me very much, next time tell us about places. Well done.
- ❖ The regional sessions were very useful and necessary. Discussions per region provided space to appreciate the work of the regional Bureau and partner NGOs. These sessions created an opportunity to find ways and means of strengthening efforts in providing quality and sustainable service, and devise strategies as a team to work more collaboratively, efficiently and transparently.
- ❖ I attended two regional sessions. They were very informative and allowed a quite good exchange of views. I appreciated that in both cases the floor was not kidnapped by the UNHCR staff but was rather shared with the NGOs members. I sometime found that the answers to questions were not to the point. The mechanism established for the Q and A should be streamlined to avoid the impression that some critical/crucial questions are not addressed or ignored on purpose. I do not have a crystal ball but it is clear that people in the podium are not always able to "register" the questions in a proper way. They should probably be assisted by somebody in the podium would have the task just to properly register the questions and the quality of the answer.
- ❖ Overall I found the regional presentations useful. I commend UNHCR staff for the focus they gave to their presentations – highlighting their priorities and current challenges. I appreciated when staff also made references to "what has changed since the last consultations."

- ❖ In regions where I had less familiarity, it was great to see the exchange during Q & A between the NGOs working in that region and the panel. This helped me get further insight than just the panel presentations alone.
- ❖ The panel format of HCR & NGOs was also a great testament to the partnership theme of the consultations.
- ❖ It was useful to meet people from this region and try to meet them outside, but I found it really boring. They only talked about a general idea of what have they done in the region.
- ❖ I think they could tell more about the projects that they are supporting in the region and they also can talk a little about their plan of action for the next year.
- ❖ This was ok however again the time was rather short, just enough to discuss the pre-determined agenda but not other emerging issues.
- ❖ These varied and the content within them varied.
- ❖ I attended Europe Bureau, MENA, and Asia and Pacific. All of them were good.
- ❖ Again these are very important sessions because here is where Regional NGOs come together and share their concerns. However, time was short and there were so many issues to be addressed. As a result task force had to be formed to work on those issues. This again raises another concern on how best this task force can address the issues in absence of Regional forums NGOs. The thought of having Regional meetings preceding the Annual Consultations could be given further consideration.
- ❖ It was helpful to allow NGOs to put questions on the work in the region and have answers on some questions and a follow up in others. The discussion was in my view frank and positive.
- ❖ NGOs are doing a lot to service refugees especially in African countries but it seems they are facing budget constraints to meet the requirements. I suggest UNHCR to look at these NGOs with an open eye to provide enough funds so as the NGOs could do its well accordingly.
- ❖ My comments on the regional sessions are similar – I appreciated the fact that the presentations were brief and there was ample time for discussion, but this necessarily meant a more ‘scattered’ approach. Overall, I think it’s probably better to have the time for discussion rather than long presentations, even at the risk of losing focus. I appreciated the balance between NGO and UNHCR staff as presenters (and thought the comments from the Syrian Red Crescent were great).
- ❖ I appreciated the time and effort the regional bureau leaders devoted to grappling with the questions posed by the NGO participants.
- ❖ Apart from the fact that the same conditions previously referred to applied. Regional sessions were more enlightening as NGOs in the same region could relate better to the situation in their region and the exchange of information in the sessions and in informal discussions amongst NGOs, and to a small extent with UNHCR provided the opportunity to identify organizations to network with for campaign and advocacy purposes or who could assist with immigration processes in particular countries where refugees from the same ethnic communities in one country sought asylum in another within the region. This is the case with certain refugee communities in Malaysia where there are no refugee camps and refugees are not legally recognized.
- ❖ The regional sessions were consistently informative. Presenters were generally committed to sharing as much information as possible. Some sessions would have

benefited from a strong NGO perspective that might have critically and constructively challenged some of the presentations.

Comments on specific Regional Sessions

MENA

- ❖ Very weak presentation.
- ❖ I attended the MENA session and found it very useful and informative, thank you to UNHCR for its openness.
- ❖ MENA session very good.
- ❖ Better than past years.
- ❖ It was most useful to hear about the situation and assistance in Syria as many Iraqis resettled in Finland approach us with various questions and needs related to families and relatives there.

EUROPE BUREAU

- ❖ I attended the European session and found it very useful and informative, thank you to UNHCR for its openness.
- ❖ Useful overviews and addressing of dilemmas being faced. Anja Klug's input particularly valuable.
- ❖ Bureau for Europe: emphasis was put on the situation in the Mediterranean which the Bureau is focusing on. However, the Bureau hardly commented on their strategy for the Balkans and the Caucasus. Perhaps they could round out their presentation by talking equally about all parts of Europe that they cover?
- ❖ Europe: Informative and to the point

AFRICA

- ❖ It should be more inclusive many African partners cannot afford to come. Consult the prior to the meeting.
- ❖ Africa session not enough analysis of situations, trends...
- ❖ Did not attend Africa.
- ❖ I only dipped in and out but field people appreciated especially the Africa region where there was only a director's overview and then many questions addressed by deputies.
- ❖ The Africa one I attended, more of a mixed bag.
- ❖ I attended the Africa Bureau session during the regional sessions. This was in addition to the informal meeting organized by the Africa Bureau to meet with African NGOs. The points raised during the informal meeting and those in the formal Africa Bureau were of great concern and importance to us. These concerns and points will constitute the basis of some follow up that we believe will improve our partnership with UNHCR and all the stakeholders in the service of the refugees and other populations of the same categories. We are therefore looking forward to improving on this partnership

ASIA and PACIFIC

- ❖ The Asia session was very helpful.
- ❖ Useful, but dominated by Asia bureau, no NGO representative on the panel. Bureau defending itself but not really a discussion.
- ❖ Did not attend Asia.
- ❖ Asia and Pacific bureau were excellent.
- ❖ Some what limited in scope of discussion, good sharing award advocacy.
- ❖ Particularly notable for me was the passion with which Janet Lim spoke about resettlement for the Bhutanese in Nepal as being so crucial to breaking the logjam for that protracted situation.

AMERICAS

- ❖ Americas need a new format.
- ❖ The Latin America one was largely useful.

General Comments on 2007 Annual Consultations with NGOs

- ❖ I felt that the whole UNHCR had tried to take on board feedback from last year.
- ❖ We were very sad to hear the very negative feedback from the NGO liaison unit when we asked to organise a side meeting event, we should be supported and our ideas even if not feasible respected.
- ❖ Need for a summary document that explains process and opportunities to feed into statement and conclusion. This should be circulated well in time.
- ❖ Otherwise very facilitated and moderated, with plenty of opportunities for networking and learning. Happy with the venues, thank you for giving us the opportunity to work together.
- ❖ The drinks reception was much appreciated.
- ❖ Participation from senior UNHCR personnel was very welcome.
- ❖ As a first timer at Pre-ExCom, would have liked more on how we can work with UNHCR's NGO liaison unit in the future.
- ❖ I prefer the Palais des Nations to the ICCG since the security obstacles seem equal and ICCG is stingier with the use of its computers. Free high-speed internet access has become essential to the effective and efficient conduct of such a large consultation.
- ❖ Great thank you for all, great work ICVA and NGO liaison unit.
- ❖ I am disappointed that there was almost no space to allow NGOs to raise specified, current issues of concern many of these issues were raised in question to the UNHCR. We need more time to address major issues of concern.
- ❖ A commitment to partnership was evident and has the potential to build capacity to respond to needs of refugees communities better. Need to share case studies of the actions which put the rhetoric into practice in the future meetings.
- ❖ Concentration on procedural matter rather than substantive issues was disappointing.
- ❖ Narrow perspectives on categories of protected people limited debate and discussion. And other categories which take our attention and need our international concern.

- ❖ Not enough time to network, agenda too tight.
- ❖ Presence of small members of refugees were positive, should be increased and their voice heard to greater extent.
- ❖ I thought that the sessions were more dominated by European concerns than usual. With the Iraq situation we realize that the US is open for a lot of criticism, but we can take it. It would be better to engage us, and to acknowledge that we have the ability to make a sizeable contribution.
- ❖ This year's Pre-Excom was successful. I continue to greatly appreciate the opportunity to gather together with refugee experts from around the world--the UNHCR staff and the NGOs to network, to renew relationships, and to learn about the cutting-edge issues in our field.
- ❖ The International Conference Centre was an attractive meeting venue in that it does not have the unpleasant (however necessary) weight of security that surrounds the Palais. However, the cafeteria at the Palais is much better, both for food and efficiency. Hats off to all the NGO unit staff for their pleasant efficiency and helpfulness, especially Fabienne Philippe!
- ❖ The most valuable gain from the 2007 Annual Consultations, in my personal experience as a first-timer to this international meeting, was the opportunity to network internationally with other NGOs, particularly those in the Asia-Pacific region. It was also very enlightening to be informed of the conditions, problems and actions taken in other countries around the globe, as common problems such as human trafficking and the conditions in which these occur are similar and shared internationally. It was possible to identify certain links, similar causes and system weaknesses that allowed human trafficking to prevail. The requirements for resettlement, camp conditions etc.
- ❖ L'anglais a dominé d'autres langues en l'occurrence le français, par la mauvaise foi des organisateurs. Pourquoi faire semblant d'imprimer les invitations en français et, venir démontrer que l'anglais est la seule langue à utiliser, ce qui est un non sens. Faire un effort dans l'avenir afin d'éviter de tels désagréments.

Overall organization of the Annual Consultations with NGOs

Link to Excom

- ❖ Following the closing session on linking to ExCom, I fully support the suggestions for news models, an annual cycle that has relevance to the year and from year to year. The ATCR is a promising question. As CCRIS currently NGO focal point to the ATCR, we will be delighted to consult with you on a possible way forward.

Structure

- ❖ The agenda was too tight, particularly for those NGOs seeking to attend side events. In such a case there was only a bare 30 minutes of our presentation time to network, take a break and have a lunch.
- ❖ It was not clear to us how and at what point we included the UNHCR staff in the planning process. The names of the HCR staff came relatively close to the consultation without any clear guidance on engagement and expectations. When we finally understood that HCR staff ought to be involved in planning rather than simply being told what to cover in their presentations, the discussions between us and the HCR's focal point persons went well. May be guidelines on this area would also be helpful,

especially for newcomers.

Sessions

- ❖ Too broad themes, too general, very poor outcome, not clear objectives.
- ❖ I felt that on the whole the sessions were quite good. It was good that UNHCR had tried to give sessions more structure but some were better, more focussed and integrated than others. Some sessions had a certain ad hoc feel to them with a slight lack of coherency. However, I valued UNHCR's strong emphasis on partnership and dialogue and for being open on this.
- ❖ Tri-partite meeting would be better in terms of impact.
- ❖ There was a good balance of UNHCR and NGO speakers for each roundtable and regional sessions.
- ❖ There was very limited use made of the wealth of experience of NGOs present at these sessions. When particular programs were shared these are very beneficial, e.g. Cape Town Refugee Right Project, Brazilian project on settlement.
- ❖ We found that some of our sister agencies had more invitations to organize round tables than they could manage. Is there need for guidelines that place a ceiling on how many round tables NGOs should organize? Allied to this in our experience we (World Vision and ICMC) agreed between ourselves that WV would be the sole organizer. Are there existing guidelines on decision making processes around the change of leadership/organizers of round tables?

Interaction with the High Commissioner

- ❖ The speech by the High Commissioner was very useful and informative.
- ❖ It would be helpful to have more time with the High Commissioner.

Plenary sessions

- ❖ The introductory overviews on the first day of the meeting were interesting.
- ❖ Plenary sessions were very well chaired.
- ❖ The plenary speakers were outstanding, especially Beth Ferris, Erika Feller, and of course the High Commissioner himself.

Side Meetings

- ❖ The side meetings were some of the most interesting as they were looking at more specific issues and fostered more dynamic debate.
- ❖ Informal meeting with Africa bureau needs to be formal and longer.
- ❖ The session on UNHCR's RSD was interesting and useful-would have welcomed the conclusion of written info- e.g. excerpts from UNHCR training manual.
- ❖ Side sessions are often the best sessions.
- ❖ Side meeting on Istanbul Protocol really helpful, same comment for no small matter.

- ❖ The Istanbul protocol round-table I had the feeling that they have written the handbook but they didn't have any idea about how to put this in the real practice.
- ❖ I can't rate the side meetings as I did not attend any.
- ❖ Time allocated for side meetings was colliding with lunch time that hinders participation of some participants or partial participation. Two side meetings were undertaken at the same time; it was difficult for someone interested to participate in both meetings at the same time.
- ❖ I found the side meetings (what a curious description!) sessions informative and helpful, especially the ones on Best Interest Determinations for children and on the Istanbul Protocol. It's a successful vehicle to have both NGO and UNHCR experts. For the one on mixed movements, it would have been good to have had a panellist from the enforcement perspective; e.g., Scott Busby of the Intergovernmental Consultation.

Recommendations for 2008.

- ❖ Pre Ex-Com should be reformed, not because it is bad, but to come closer to the agenda of ExCom and to strengthen the profile of NGOs and to have better influence in decision making.
- ❖ Moderators should pose questions so that discussion is more guided/channeled towards conclusions
- ❖ Recommend overlap between NGO consultation and ExCom so that member states and broader UNHCR staff can engage in key issues and conclusions.
- ❖ Major problem with identifying people, which really made it hard to network.
- ❖ Tiny name badges and the nice clear organisation name place on display at first and last plenary were swept away too quickly. Two suggestions: Additional badges are provided showing only name and organization, in large font; and participants keep their organization name place card to carry with them and display in front of them in all other sessions, to help identification.
- ❖ Not enough time between sessions to talk to people, 10 minutes between sessions impossible to talk to anyone without missing beginning of next session. Solution is perhaps: spread over full three days or cover one item fewer on the agenda.
- ❖ You should have an "average/ok" category in the evaluation. It's big leap from "poor" to "good".
- ❖ Generally the sessions are too large and the topics too general, without as much structure as they might have. Further such large sessions are not conducive to real debate beyond Q and A. The environment can be quite intimidating and this is further exacerbated by the large rooms and everyone sitting in rows. It would be better if the sessions could be smaller and people sitting in more of a round table setting.
- ❖ Questions should be more concrete to allow a dynamic and platform discussion.
- ❖ The discussions should be thematic and/or regional. We would be asking to monitor impact and how our input was taken on board.
- ❖ Need to change timing so that the Annual Consultations more easily can feed into ExCom.

- ❖ I like and support Erika Feller's proposal to prepare Pre-ExCom on regional level with regional UNHCR offices, we will include this in our cooperation with UNHCR office in Brussels.
- ❖ Maybe Pre-ExCom meeting should take place earlier or as proposed during these meeting to have twice the possibility to meet.
- ❖ Obtaining visa to attend it is a mess. UNHCR should advocate to the Swiss Embassies to ease their restrictions for next year's participants.
- ❖ Change date of meeting to have on ExCom meeting and agenda.
- ❖ It would be useful to include NGOs at a much earlier stage in the drafting of the conclusions as by Pre-ExCom, it is too late to be meaningful.
- ❖ Some states, e.g. Australia include NGO as part of their ExCom delegation, would UNHCR wish to advocate that other states adopt this practice? We would welcome this.
- ❖ If UNHCR is to cut down its European presence, would welcome further dialogue on how national NGOs can support and again support from UNHCR especially in advocacy work with governments.
- ❖ Is it possible for participants to join the meetings via video conferencing? This would decrease our carbon footprint and could enable NGO participants from poorer countries to contribute.
- ❖ Support idea of Post-ExCom instead of Pre-ExCom.
- ❖ Pre-ExCom should be post ExCom with a day linking NGOs, member states and UNHCR – "tripartite day".
- ❖ Please include information on side sessions in the full agenda and in advance of the ExCom on the website. We often have to schedule bilateral and network meetings which conflict with side sessions when we do not know the schedule for side sessions in advance.
- ❖ To pay more attention on legal discussion, to establish different consultation with legal NGO, may be on regional or sub regional level.
- ❖ Afin d'avoir la participation de tous et de chacun il est impérieux d'actionner les services d'interprètes, tant aux plénières qu'aux sessions régionales.
- ❖ Excellent... Stay out of the Palais except for closing session if possible!
- ❖ The parallel agendas for rights-based advocacy NGOs and humanitarian implementing partners were not balanced – weakness on rights-based sessions and over-emphasis for humanitarian assistance partners. Unless the agenda can try more successfully to offer relevant cross-sectoral themes, we should perhaps consider admitting we are different and separate the events. We need more focus to the discussions that are more than the "reporting" process we seem locked into currently.
- ❖ Annual Consultations with NGOs are very useful and in 2008 it will be nice to have more working groups to make up the strategy of work at the particular regions.
- ❖ Create more space for informal networking and access to UNHCR staff.
- ❖ Limit speakers to 7-8 minutes in panel sessions and devote more time to dialogue with NGOs.
- ❖ The organization was perfect. UNHCR should improve its support for more partners to attend the Consultation Meeting based on country level and preference should not be given to some countries to dominate.

- ❖ Very good improvement, less competition with side meetings, therefore better profits.
- ❖ The ICCG venue was good, spacious and uncomplicated. Also easier to get to/into than the Palais.
- ❖ Difficult to have time for networking as there were so many useful sessions and hardly time to move between them. Food, drinks and parking extremely expensive near/at ICCG, prohibitive for some NGOs. Do provide some coffee and tea or negotiate cheaper rates for such events, same for the parking.
- ❖ Try to create more room for practical field and problem focused exchanges between UNHCR and NGOs it used to be possible to even make appointments to see individual officers during these pre-excom consultations. That was very useful.
- ❖ Could the Bureaux issue a one-page document to accompany their presentation? The document would outline the strategy UNHCR is taking for each country/region. It was still unclear after the presentation what the UNHCR strategy is for certain countries.
- ❖ There could not be any better opportunity for networking. However, it would be more useful to organize regional meetings also for the round tables and the side meetings. Most of the participants and particularly the first timers could not benefit from most of the sessions because the subject was not directly related to their field work.
- ❖ I liked the change of venue. Having the Pre-EXCOM meetings outside the Palais made getting name-tags, and entering and going out of the building much easier. The atmosphere was more NGO-friendly and it was good to have wireless internet connection to help us catch up with our work back home in between sessions. Of course as NGOs we are always happy to be ensured that the outcomes from Pre-EXCOM are taken to the governments in a meaningful way and not have 3 days of many meetings presented in a hurry to governments and get a chance to really dialogue. The follow up to the meetings is more important than the meetings themselves. Also, as I said above (and perhaps this is already happening but I'm not aware of it) it would be so helpful to have presentations, notes etc of the meeting online which could perhaps be accessed by password by participants. It is useful to keep a record of what was said and ensure that the maximum is made of the knowledge shared at the meetings.
- ❖ And finally, I would like to thank you for your kind assistance and patience with us in the run up to the Pre-EXCOM (with help with applications forms, procedures, etc). When I needed help from your office, I got it and for this I am grateful.
- ❖ Local NGOs should be included especially from countries where humanitarian operation is large to help in shaping the policy and bring different view of the Displaced IDPs and Refugees people to the UN. Thank you for your inclusiveness.
- ❖ A *marketplace* can be useful and should be available.
- ❖ As a first time participant, I think the 2007 Annual Consultations with NGOs was great and deserves commendation. The efforts to not only engage NGOs at international meetings such as this but solicit their input in the protection of refugees, IDPS and other vulnerable groups cannot be taken for granted. Creating this forum also allows NGOs small, big, international, national and regional to interact and network. I would suggest for continuity and greater impact that 2007 participants be encouraged to attend 2008 consultations. Furthermore, that NGOs contribution from discussions be submitted to EXCOM before their final statements. I suggest an earlier meeting.
- ❖ It is a good forum for information sharing and networking. If you also attend the ATCR conference some issues tend to be repeated.

- ❖ As I stated in one intervention I think that one of the main, if not the main issue of the consultations this year was partnership. I also added that it was not in our discussions in Geneva that we should expect tremendous progress on the issue. I however think that we should have tried with a bit more of imagination to get better results. To this effect I would have proposed to prepare a kind of simulation exercise where NGOs coming from the field could have acted in the framework of a given project. Probably in the future the discussions will be given a more democratic tone now that they are held far from the Palais.
- ❖ Overall, I think the consultations are effective in updating/information sharing between NGOs and HCR. And there is some opportunity for sharing among NGOs. In the better sessions, there were also at least “signals” of issues that are emerging. However, there is limited opportunity to actually advance thinking either as to the development of new concepts, possible policy directions or even endorsement of new practices.
- ❖ I understand that the consultations are a struggle to balance so many different objectives. For me, it is important to keep the connection between the larger policy debates (protection, HR) and the operations in the consultations. Since many of us are responsible for operationalizing such policies. Perhaps there is a way to address things sequentially and or have some guiding questions for presenters to tie the policy and practice together.
- ❖ Given the number of participants, more thought needs to be given to how to increase discussion/dialogue. This could be accomplished either by offering more concurrent sessions or having a way to physically break out into discussion groups at the end of the presentations. This would require a change in some of the rooms used as well as the schedule.
- ❖ As mentioned above, I found the room settings too formal for the round table sessions. Even so, in most sessions I thought presenters did a good job in setting a tone for open sharing of concerns and questions.
- ❖ In general, I think the agenda is too tight. Perhaps it could start earlier in the morning with longer breaks between sessions? There was not enough time to provide for networking. As a result, I had to miss sessions in order to hold those conversations. And in some cases, people I met during the consultation already had all their “in between time” scheduled, leaving no opportunity for follow-up conversations.
- ❖ I found the lunch-time side-meeting sessions I attended quite informative, but as a result missed lunch in the cafeteria which was then closed. I then had to go off-site to find lunch and miss more of the formal consultations. Is there anyway for ICCG to expand the cafeteria hours or even the selling of sandwiches, salads or other snacks?
- ❖ Finally, let me say thank you to all who worked to pull this consultation together. The types of questions raised during the closing plenary about how to make it better and a higher impact are the right direction to go. But in the process, I would ask the planners to remember the national NGOs, many of whom do not get the ability to interact with the international NGOs and HCR in such a collaborative format throughout the year. And, so I hope that we can continue to make the consultations accessible for them as well.
- ❖ It could be interesting to have bigger NGOs names in the bandage.
- ❖ I find interesting do a NGOs fair where all NGOs can show their own projects, handbooks, leaflet...promotional material where each representative can have a walk and find the NGOs that can collaborate with them. Just to do easier and useful the network of NGOs

- ❖ The organization: well organized and the ICCG building is well suited for meetings (although you feel less connected with the UN).
- ❖ Our organization organized a side meeting: we were pleased with the cooperation with the NGO unit, so everything was well organized on the early Thursday morning.
- ❖ It was my first time to attend so I think the sessions were generally good, could have done with more time though I know this is not easy due to resource constraints. Maybe in the future the consultations can begin slightly earlier through e-forums so that by the time participants are converging to meet physically, the issues will have already been on the table through informal internet discussions.
- ❖ The name badges were of limited use, as you could not clearly read the name of the individual or their institutional affiliation.
- ❖ Some issues raised in the Regional sessions could not be adequately addressed by the Senior Management of the Regional Bureau. Regional NGOs could submit their issues/concerns well in advance to the Regional Bureaus so as to provide enough time for the UNHCR Senior Management of the Regional Bureaux to analyse them and prepare responses.
- ❖ Timing for the side meetings was not very conducive as they were taking place during the Lunch time. I don't think all the participants who wished to attend managed to be there on time.
- ❖ As said earlier, I haven't had such an achievement in my objectives when attending Global Consultations.
- ❖ The format should be kept. The challenge every year is to allocate more time for interaction. May be we should have less speakers, in the regional session I attended, panellist were helpful in keeping their presentation short. The difficulty was to keep participants short and focused.
- ❖ The Annual Consultations with the NGOs have been very good. The fact that many NGOs turned up to attend this year compared to last year is an indication of interest from all who came that there is something important about these consultations. The discussions have been conducted in a frank and open manner. Because we care about what we are doing to the people we are serving, we feel like contributing to any discussions meant to improve our services, and these consultations seem to provide the best opportunity for us to do so. The representation of the NGOs was well worked out, especially with such presentations as those from the International Council of Volunteer Agencies (ICVA).
- ❖ The High Commissioner made a number of declarations that were useful and encouraging to all of us, especially those pertaining to UNHCR commitment to working with all IPs regardless of their status as international or national NGOs. His appreciation of, and comments made to reassure, all those who contributed during the discussions in his presence, was something to be greatly commended and appreciated by all of us. There is also the promise to continue the task of mobilizing resources for the services of the refugees, the IDPs and the returnees. These positive gestures from UNHCR will in turn improve the spirit of partnership between UNHCR and all the actors in the field of refugee service. We will ensure that we make our contribution to the partnership as generously as we can to improve the services we are rendering to the refugees/returnees/IDPs.
- ❖ I must add that the High Commissioner has an in-depth knowledge of the people UNHCR is serving, i.e. the refugees, the returnees and the IDPs, and this has greatly contributed to what all the stakeholders need for better provision of services.

- ❖ I would however suggest that more National NGOs be enabled to attend the meeting in the coming years so that UNHCR could come closer to the reality of the situations in the local settings where the services to the refugees and others is being carried out.
- ❖ I would also like to suggest that the ExCom take into account the concerns of the NGOs as they were expressed during the pre-ExCom meetings. This would mean that some formula has to be worked out to allow the inclusion of some of the important views expressed during the Pre-ExCom into its final resolutions of the ExCom.
- ❖ Another observation is that networking has not been easy among NGOs and others who would be interested in knowing what some of us are doing. These would be possibly to donor agencies to which we would like to sell our programs for contribution in funds. The participants were too many for us to have meaningful time to discuss our programs. The meetings were scheduled with only limited breaks for side talks by the time we leave the venues. Given the number of participants, tea and lunch breaks were not enough to include other major engagements unless such engagements were previously/earlier stated between the parties involved.
- ❖ I did not have time to check the websites provided by UNHCR for us to access information, but I would suggest that the “Partner Brief Profile” for all the participants including some would-be donors be emailed to all of us early enough to enable us identify some of the agencies we would appropriately meet during the Consultations.
- ❖ It is a very useful meeting whereby NGOs have time to share their experiences from different countries. I suggest for 2008 meeting to have representatives from Excom members so as they can hear direct issues raised by NGOs to simplify the adoption of the statements from the NGOs during the Excom. As experience said in most of the previous Excom meeting statements are already prepared and there were very little changes to adopt statements from NGOs consultation meeting.
- ❖ I thought the ICCG venue was good and made for a bit more ‘collaborative’ feeling. For networking, it would help if the name tags could be larger. Except for the first plenary (where there were organizational signs), it was hard to meet people if you didn’t know what they looked like! I thought Craig Johnstone was great and appreciated his willingness to say ‘I don’t know’ when he couldn’t respond to a particular question.
- ❖ It is suggested that the structure of NGO consultations for 2008 be completely changed to accommodate refugee community NGOs as well as national NGOs that are unable to afford expensive and time-consuming trips to Europe. The suggestion that country and regional consultations with national NGOs be done many months prior to Ex-Com in Geneva, is given full support. It might provide a far more in-depth and realistic assessment of the conditions faced by refugees in each region. A rapporteur could be appointed by UNHCR for consultation meetings at each level, i.e. national, regional and international.
- ❖ Country representatives could be selected for regional and international consultation meetings reducing the number of NGOs and the amount of funds needed to send representatives for international consultations and the Ex-com Meeting. In this way, the financial burden on NGO partners as well as UNHCR may be shared and lightened.
- ❖ I would recommend earlier and more international collaboration among presenters, particularly in the round table sessions. These sessions would be more useful if this were to occur.