

Item 4 (a)

Standing Committee 66th Meeting

Conference Room Paper Presentation: New Approaches to Solutions

Mr Chairman, Distinguished Delegates,

Solutions are secured when refugees, IDPs, stateless persons and returnees enjoy their rights, including access to national services and systems, without facing any discrimination. The opportunities they have while displaced - in most cases for close to a generation - will in good part determine their ability to contribute to the communities in which they do settle, to raise children prepared for the modern world and to be agents for peace wherever they land.

UNHCR's solutions work addresses four interrelated dimensions, namely: the legal, the economic, the socio-cultural and civil-political. Solutions need to be comprehensive: approaches to solutions that address only one dimension or that are undertaken without meaningful participation and consultation with displaced persons and communities tend not to be sustainable. They must be built together with displaced and host communities, with Governments, civil society and international actors.

Comprehensive multi-year, multi-partner protection and solutions strategies must be put in place from the very onset of displacement, guiding the engagement of all actors, even when the full realisation of solutions is not within immediate reach.

We can't know at the beginning whether the solution for any individual refugee will be return, settlement in the country of first asylum, or a future in a resettlement country or in a place where they travel for work or study. We do know that every

refugee, IDP, stateless person and returnee seeks to have the skills, the networks, the confidence and the resilience to ensure that they are able to contribute to their current and future communities and that extended periods of time where people are isolated, dependent and unable to plan do not prepare them well for contributing to a peaceful, progressive world.

This means that we need to establish responses in such a way as to facilitate the nurturing of the resilience and desire for peace, and the skills and capacities that displaced communities bring with them. We need to encourage their independence in accessing goods and services and we need to find ways to ensure that their presence among host communities brings as many positive outcomes as possible.

Supporting displaced and host communities to equip themselves for healthy futures is only part of the puzzle. We need to ensure that as an international community, we acknowledge and tackle the root causes of displacement and the most challenging barriers to return and settlement – including land issues, nationality and national identity, the rights and inclusion of minorities and marginalized peoples.

UNHCR has long understood the centrality of national and local, civil society actors and we are strengthening this critical engagement alongside closer collaboration with UNDP, UN Habitat and others to ensure that refugees, IDPs, stateless populations and returnees are included in rule of law programming such as access to justice, housing land and property, civil documentation and community policing. When UNHCR's resources contribute to existing systems and can encourage the adaptations necessary to take on the specific needs of the populations for which UNHCR is responsible, we facilitate the take up of future opportunities while protection is improved in the immediate and long term.

In the longer term, protection approaches that encourage connection with local authorities and civil society help refugees and IDPs prepare for the future. Whether they settle at home or elsewhere, they will need to use legal and administrative services, and to replace or have issued documents using the same channels as their neighbours.

In an increasingly mobile world, such flexibility is important also when persons of concern to UNHCR take up opportunities for work, education and family reunion that many of us take for granted. UNHCR is working with partners – including with employers, universities and training institutions, NGOs and members of the Executive Committee - to lift the barriers to refugees' use of global pathways to protection and solutions. Pathways such as those that support labour mobility might provide training and experience on which refugees can build, or they might offer the chance at a longer-term future in a country in need of the particular skills they bring. As long as the opportunities ensure protection against refoulement and the chance to live a safe and independent life, they can be both a means to secure protection and stepping-stones to solutions as yet unidentified.

The pathway to a solution in 2016 is unlikely to be direct. Like so many of us, refugees, IDPs and stateless persons will need to take up what opportunities they can. It is our job, as an international community, to lift barriers; to ensure that displacement and legal status do not isolate; to provide the safety nets that we offer everyone else and to ensure throughout that the specific protection needs of persons of concern to UNHCR are taken into account. Once that framework is in place, the resilience, the creativity and the determination that displaced populations display through their survival can flourish.

Thank you.