



European Union

Global Compact on Refugees - Second thematic session

First Panel: Preparedness and rapid response

EU Statement

Geneva, 17 October 2017

– CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY –

Global Compact on Refugees - Second thematic session
First Panel: Preparedness and rapid response
EU Statement
Geneva, 17 October 2017

Mr./Ms. Chairperson,

I share these remarks on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

We have actively contributed to and stand behind the New York Declaration. We therefore support the process led by UNHCR to prepare the Global Compact on Refugees. We also thank UNHCR for its leadership in rolling out the unanimously agreed Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF). We also recognise the significant efforts made by all countries hosting large numbers of refugees. We further recall that the New York declaration applies to all States and requires more responsibility sharing across the globe.

We wish to express satisfaction for the organisation of the thematic discussions. We emphasise their inclusive format with active participation of all relevant actors, including the civil society. Our discussions should help identify successful practices which provide the basis for developing the Programme of Action complementing the CRRF.

This first panel is dedicated to preparedness and rapid response to large movements of refugees.

The EU and its member States want to share their experience in this respect. The European Union is a regional solidarity arrangement, also for refugee situations. In this regard, the European Union and its Member States continue to work towards reforming their Common European Asylum System to agree a system aiming at a more equitable sharing of responsibility, solidarity and resilience to future crises. The EU Member States already contribute to alleviating the pressure on Greece and Italy, through assistance but also the relocation of persons in need of international protection.

More generally, the EU and its Member States consider that the measures outlined in the section "reception and admission" of the CRRF should be taken at the onset of a large movement of refugees by receiving countries. The international community should be ready to co-operate with them as appropriate.

The EU and its Member States recognise that responses, in full respect of international human rights law and international refugee law, should be tailored to the specific contexts. Responses should also be guided by the "do no harm" principle and conflict sensitivity in addition to humanitarian principles.

For the measures foreseen by the CRRF to be fully effective, the EU and its Member States deem it essential to enhance preparedness. Preparedness measures can be beneficial for both host and forcibly displaced populations, thus increasing their acceptability by host populations. Experience shows that, for instance, long-term local area planning helps anticipate population growth and expansion of services. Similarly, contingency and response planning for displacement increases the capacity to rapidly respond to a population influx.

Host countries could consider enhancing the response capacity encompassing both state and non-state actors to ensure early action. Capacities of national and local authorities as well as host

communities should be strengthened to deal with sudden influx of refugees. These enhanced capacities would also help identify key regions and localities that tend to face recurrent refugee emergencies.

International organisations and other actors involved in the immediate response should engage competent authorities, host communities and civil society organisations in the drawing up of contingency plans and scenario-planning to help with quick and efficient provision of assistance at the outset of an emergency.

We consider it necessary to enhance evidence-based forecasting of future refugee movements for better planning.

Preparedness could imply international and regional stand-by and support arrangements to become active when a country or sub-region is disproportionately affected by a refugee situation. In some situations, rapid response mechanisms and mobilising humanitarian organisations to rapidly assess and respond to emergencies could be called upon or developed.

Use of budgetary crisis modifiers, or contingency windows that would allow for quick reorientation of funding should also be more widely used. This would ensure ongoing programs can respond rapidly and adequately to displacement crises. Promotion of innovative solutions, including digital, should also be taken into account.

Preparedness also includes building effective national asylum systems which are of particular importance in situations of mixed migration and providing tailor-made responses, in full compliance with international human rights and international refugee law and taking into account the qualification and status of third country nationals or stateless persons as refugees or as persons who otherwise need international protection. We wish to underline UNHCR's central role in developing and strengthening asylum systems.

Host countries should take appropriate measures to protect refugees, especially children, women and other persons in vulnerable situations, from all forms of violence already at the onset of large movements and in cooperation with state and non-state actors.

Steps should also be taken to ensure the credibility of asylum systems, including through cooperation among the countries of origin, transit and destination to facilitate the return and readmission of those who do not qualify for international protection. The EU emphasises the obligation of all States as enshrined in international law to accept the return of their nationals who do not have the right to stay on another State's territory. At the same time, we should ensure that returns and readmissions are carried out in full compliance with international law, and in particular with the principle of non-refoulement as established by the 1951 Refugee Convention.

We should support social protection emergency preparedness with a view to also catering for forcibly displaced populations.

Thank you Mr./Ms Chairperson.