

## **Multi-stakeholder meeting on the proposed Global Refugee Response Group**

**Graduate Institute, 11 December 2017**

A former Danish Prime Minister used to say that a good statement should contain three political messages, and that they all should be repeated three times, so that everybody in the audience clearly understood what these messages were. I'll put forward my three messages, but not repeat them - as that, of course, will not be necessary in this forum of really smart people...

But before I turn to the messages, allow me a few introductory remarks on the idea of establishing a Global Refugee Response Group. I do think that in establishing such a Group, we can actually draw a lot from our experiences with the Solutions Alliance initiative. The Group clearly should be able to deliver on information sharing, advocacy, strategic thinking and policy development, some of the key elements of the Solution Alliance.

We need to think carefully on the question of membership, and from the Danish side we do have some ideas here to be tested in our break-out sessions – with a clear emphasis on strong involvement of Governments. We also need to look carefully on the role of UNHCR. If we place the Group, and its potential Secretariat, too close to UNHCR we may miss the point. I think we need to signal a paradigm shift in the way we work on these issues, as an international community - and that calls for clear and strong, to a certain extent also symbolic, decisions on how we organize this line of work.

Now the three messages, which also aim to contextualize our discussion today.

The **first** is, that even though we may today focus primarily at the global level, i.e. the proposed Global Group or Platform, in the end what matters is action at country level. This means that we need to be specific. Countries are very different, and so are their relationships with neighboring countries and communities.

The key perspective in the CRRF is to mobilize a whole-of society-approach to large-scale movements of refugees, wherever or whenever such situations happen.

That calls for limiting traditional humanitarian interventions to the early stages of the emergency.

It calls for a speedy involvement of national governments, line ministries, local authorities, development actors, civil society and the private sector in what we could call ‘the second line of defense’, with inclusion of refugees in national and local service delivery, and providing the access for refugees to work and to have a proper livelihood.

It presupposed that additional public expenditures to do this – and thus deliver on a key Global Public Good – will be covered by the international community at large. If the CRRF approach is to work, additional development funding will be key. The idea of solidarity conferences or the like is a good one. We have a number of examples to prove it, but only in the short term so far. We need to develop the notions of country-specific compacts even further – in order to ensure also the longer-term commitments of all relevant actors.

In all this, national leadership remains fundamental in developing the practical and operational national response to a large-scale movement. But in order to support that national leadership, and to help mobilize the necessary resources, co-leadership from a few international donors or institutions, both in country and at capital level, do often seem necessary.

When ERC Mark Lowcock was here a few days ago to launch the UN’s Global Appeals for 2018, he clearly asked for individual donors to step up to the plate and take responsibility for donor conferences in 2018.

The same basically applies to large-scale refugee influxes. If thing happens in country X, we need donor Y and institution Z to join up to lead the donor support efforts, to organize a solidarity conference, to push other donors for more funding, and to create and maintain the longer-term compacts necessary. The establishment of such practices will in the end most probably be more important than the establishment of the Global Group.

My **second** message will be shorter. It is that the CRRF means another way of doing business, and another way of understanding protection. Risking my reputation by simplifying the world beyond what might be permissible, I’ll sum up the ‘standard refugee response model’ as being the establishment of parallel systems, run by UNHCR and local refugee authorities, with a great number of implementing partners, in order to provide protection and care and maintenance to refugees who, in general, are not included in the national systems of their host countries.

You’ll hear, more than once in a while, UNHCR staff members saying that their provision of social services, and their care and maintenance interventions, are an

essential part of the agency's protection work, and that it creates leverage for effective refugee protection.

Once you include, and provide the same services to, host communities and to refugees, it will, of course, not be for UNHCR to provide for this. It will be the task of national and local authorities, supported by development actors. UNHCR remains responsible for the protection of refugees, but the protection work will have to be undertaken in another way. You could say – a more classical approach to protection with emphasis on monitoring and data collection, which will be important in a development context as well.

My **third** - and final - message is a bit broader. I'm quite concerned that our discussion of how we can create better alignment between humanitarian and development intervention, moving from a humanitarian mode of operation to a development mode in dealing with large-scale movements – and seeing the CRRF as an embodiment of the New Way Of Working (NWOW) takes place in splendid isolation from the discussions in New York of reform of the UN Development System.

The SG's report on this is not yet out, but early next year our colleagues in New York will discuss, and eventually decide, on major changes in the UN Development System - empowerment of the RC-function, limiting country presence of some organizations, merging the UN Country Team and the Humanitarian Country Team. This would have a potentially huge impact on how the interface between the humanitarian and the development work of the system: The same issues which we discuss in the context of the CRRF roll out and the Programme of Action for the Global Compact on Refugees.

I have no solutions here. But we need to be very vigilant in Geneva, in order to impact on the discussions in New York, but also to make sure that what we decide as the new 'standard model' for dealing with refugee situations at country level do not contradict whatever decision will be taken by the General Assembly.

Carsten Staur