

74th meeting of the Standing Committee
5-7 March 2018

Agenda items 7 and 8

Introductory Remarks by Volker Türk
Assistant High Commissioner for Refugees (Protection)

Mr Chair, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

'Protection and solutions' features prominently at the June Standing Committee and at the Executive Committee meetings in October. Of course, the protection and solutions dimension is central to the review of operational developments and management issues, including in the context of UNHCR's change process, as you could hear from my colleagues over the past few days. My introductory remarks today will therefore be brief. Underpinning it is a people-orientation and a deep sense of accountability that is informed by an age, gender and diversity approach.

At the outset, let me express again our heartfelt appreciation to everyone present here today for the profound commitment and great support demonstrated in the **development of the Global Compact on Refugees [GCR]** over the past two years. This has indeed been an exciting journey together which we continue whole-heartedly now that we have embarked on the implementation of the GCR and ahead of the Global Refugee Forum in December.

The affirmation of the Global Compact was a clear recognition by the international community that responding to refugee situations cannot be addressed in isolation and that multilateralism and international cooperation have a crucial role to fulfil. The *status quo*, where the impact of hosting refugees rests disproportionately on some countries and the support base equally only on few, is not sustainable.

We are confident that the Global Compact will inspire countries and partners to come together to put words into practice – to collectively address what is a global responsibility. Greater responsibility-sharing is essential to strengthen solidarity with host communities and to increase support for refugees and other people on the move so they can thrive. Again, let me highlight in particular the gender equality, child protection and diversity dimension, especially for minority groups or those living with disabilities.

Since the beginning of the year, I had a chance to visit Nigeria, Cameroon, Mali, Mauritania and France. I am pleased to report how much the principles and approach of the GCR and CRRF are already being put into practice in addition to the 15 CRRF roll-out countries.

For some time now we have been engaged in **high-level protection dialogues** with Governments, which offer opportunities for GCR implementation, including areas where commitments and contributions could be identified for announcement at the Global Refugee Forum [GRF]. For instance, the four countries of the Lake Chad Basin came together - at Ministerial level – end of January to adopt an updated Abuja protection declaration, building on the GCR. Two days ago we heard how in the Central America context the six countries of the MIRPS have advanced action at national and regional level in the spirit of the GCR. We hope this could pave the way for a solidarity conference later this year. Yesterday the side event on the Syria situation demonstrated how much the tenets of the GCR have been anchored in the response, be it in Turkey, Lebanon or Jordan. We will explore further how we can advance the GCR in the context of the Rohingya refugee situation, notably in Bangladesh, and for the Afghan situation.

At the ground I was impressed by the creative ways in which the GCR is already being ‘implemented’ in Mbera camp in Mauritania, for example. Expected IDA18 funding will ensure social cohesion with the host communities in the education and livelihood areas. An interesting UNHCR-ILO project provides vocational training to young refugee and host community women and men, empowering the youth, notably young women, and contributing to their self-reliance. Similarly, refugee women highly praised the kitchen gardens run by different NGO partners, which helps them to provide for their families and equips them with new skills of good use also upon eventual return. Or in Mali where I witnessed in Kayes a ceremony for the handing over of nationality certificates to former refugees.

Work has started on **follow-up arrangements**, both in preparations for the Global Refugee Forum and internally. For example, our internal planning instructions for the next operations management cycle incorporate the GCR approach and, with your support, we have put aside capacity internally to help implement the GCR. As my colleagues, Kelly Clements and George Okoth-Obbo, have already observed, the regionalisation/decentralisation process, together with key **UN reforms**, offers up opportunities for the implementation of the GCR. In particular, as the GCR calls for engagement with development actors, regionalisation will offer more opportunities for us to engage with such actors in the regions and on the ground. Regionalisation/decentralisation also offers the opportunity for more meaningful engagement with regional and local actors, not least in line with the second work stream of the Grand Bargain.

We will hear later from Daniel Endres and Sweta Madhuri Kannan under agenda item 7, on last year’s **High Commissioner’s Dialogue**, which focused on ‘Protection and solutions in urban settings: engaging cities’. Cities and local authorities have long played an important role in extending protection and solutions to displaced and stateless people. Recent displacement movements highlight how cities and local authorities are increasingly becoming **frontline responders** to displacement. It was heartening to see how the Dialogue brought together some 600 participants, including State representatives, mayors and local authorities, city networks, refugees, humanitarian and development organizations, as well as urban experts, for a very lively and practice-oriented discussion on how to respond to displacement and statelessness in urban settings.

Daniel Endres, Ritu Shroff, and Perveen Ali will further brief the Committee on the **Global Compact on Refugees** and preparations for the first **Global Refugee Forum**. In addition to today’s discussion, there will be further opportunities to discuss preparations for the forum at the first preparatory meeting at the end of March.

Thank you for your attention.