

High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges:

Children on the Move

Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland

8 and 9 December 2016

Summary report

Background

In 2007, UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres launched the first Dialogue on Protection Challenges (Dialogue), which was designed to facilitate a lively and informal discussion on new or emerging global protection issues.

Over the subsequent years, the Dialogue has been used as an important forum to discuss protection challenges related to UNHCR's mandate and work, and to identify ways of strengthening the protection of people of concern.

The Dialogue is not structured to elicit formal or agreed outcomes, but rather provides a forum for a free and open exchange of views between States, non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations, the academic and research community, and other stakeholders. At the close of the meeting, the High Commissioner delivers a summary of the discussions and highlights elements for follow up.

Overview of the 2016 Dialogue:

The theme for the 2016 Dialogue was 'Children on the Move', a topic which built on various other events held during 2016, notably the United Nations summit on refugees and migrants, the UNHCR-NGO consultations on youth and the Global refugee youth consultations.

The Dialogue was attended by a wide array of child protection experts, States, intergovernmental organizations, civil society and other humanitarian and academic partners, and included 12 refugee youth representatives. A total of **676 individuals** registered to attend the Dialogue.

In addition to the plenary opening and closing sessions, there were three thematic sessions:

- (i) Pursuing regional approaches to protect children on the move;
- (ii) Operationalizing children's rights; and
- (iii) Securing solutions for children on the move.

Two side events were held on:

- (i) Responding to sexual and gender-based violence for children on the move; and
- (ii) Engaging young people on the move in protection and solutions.

Four situational roundtables took place during the lunch break on 8 December:

- (i) Children on the move in Central America and Mexico: the displacement cycle;
- (ii) Children on the move through North Africa and the Middle East: dreams, desperation and determination;

- (iii) Considering comprehensive approaches for Afghan children on the move; and,
- (iv) Unaccompanied and separated children in Europe: from principles to practices.

Outcomes of the 2016 Dialogue

With regard to the outcomes of the discussions, the High Commissioner noted the following conclusions, key recommendations and areas for follow up in his closing remarks:

- Children are children first, regardless of their migratory status. Children on the move should not be viewed as a threat, but rather should be approached with an ethic of care and protection.
- The value of the pertinent observations and recommendations from the youth delegates was well recognized, and UNHCR will look into ways to establish a refugee youth advisory board, which will allow for a systematic way to follow up on some of the recommendations made during the Dialogue and the global refugee youth consultations, and ensure meaningful consultation and engagement with youth in policy decisions.
- Despite the collective ownership of the strong legal framework that exists for children and the consensus on its importance, there is a vital need for “a collective push” towards:
 1. Ending immigration detention of children and implementing alternatives to detention, including through increased engagement with UNHCR’s “Beyond detention strategy”;
 2. Ending childhood statelessness and ensuring documentation and birth registration for all children;
 3. Facilitating family reunification and actively pursuing clear pathways to comprehensive solutions in a timely manner for today’s refugee children and youth;
 4. Ensuring access to education and learning opportunities for children on the move;
 5. Strengthening national child protection systems that are inclusive of all children on the territory of a State;
 6. Increasing regional and cross-national cooperation in relation to child protection;
 7. Increasing international cooperation and sustained multi-year financial support to strengthen the capacity of State and non-governmental actors to protect and provide services for children on the move, particularly in the case of large scale movements where national capacities may need additional support;
 8. Exploring greater private sector engagement, including to consider new and different approaches;
 9. Recognizing the value of the participation of children and youth in policy and decision-making; and
 10. Developing more reliable sources of data.
- The operational considerations discussed during the Dialogue will inform the application of the comprehensive refugee response framework and the preparations for the global compact on refugees to be adopted in 2018.