

**Executive Committee of the
High Commissioner's Programme**

Distr.: Restricted
7 June 2017
English
Original: English and French

Standing Committee
69th meeting

Update on resettlement

Summary

This paper provides an update on resettlement activities undertaken by UNHCR, in close cooperation with United Nations Member States and other partners, since the 66th meeting of the Standing Committee in June 2016. It focuses on recent trends in resettlement, efforts to further strengthen and expedite resettlement processing, and the growing network of partnerships and capacity-building initiatives.

Contents

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
I. Introduction	1-4	3
II. Resettlement opportunities and achievements.....	5-11	3
III. Strengthening resettlement processing	12-16	4
IV. Capacity-building and partnership	17-22	5
V. Conclusion	23-24	6

I. Introduction

1. Against a backdrop of large-scale forced displacement, resettlement continues to serve as an important tool to offer protection and solutions for some of the world's most vulnerable refugees. It is also a tangible way to demonstrate solidarity and responsibility-sharing with States hosting large numbers of refugees, particularly in protracted displacement situations.

2. The need for greater solidarity and responsibility-sharing to protect and assist refugees and support host States and communities was recognized at the United Nations Summit for Refugees and Migrants in September 2016. In the resulting New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, States agreed to "aim to provide resettlement places and other legal pathways for admission" on a scale commensurate with the annual needs identified by UNHCR. Indeed, annex I to the New York Declaration, the comprehensive refugee response framework (CRRF), contains as one of its four overarching objectives the expansion of access to third-country solutions.

3. In 2016, global resettlement reached a 20-year high, with 162,500 refugees referred by UNHCR and over 125,600 able to depart and start building a life in a new country. However, despite the commitments made in New York in 2016, UNHCR expects to see a reversal in global resettlement opportunities in 2017, potentially drawing to a close a five-year trend of growth in resettlement quotas. At the same time, resettlement has come under pressure as a result of a climate of heightened attention to national security and the employment of resettlement in some contexts to address migration management challenges. In response to these challenges, strengthening the credibility of, and confidence in, resettlement and ensuring it effectively contributes to protection outcomes will remain a priority.

4. Despite the uncertainty in global resettlement places in 2017, a growing and more diverse group of States continue to express interest in receiving resettlement applications. UNHCR will intensify its efforts to build the capacity of new and emerging resettlement States and ensure that programmes are sustainable. UNHCR will also capitalize on recent developments in resettlement processing to ensure that processes are as efficient as possible while still being robust in terms of integrity. Further emphasis will be placed on partnerships with State actors, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector, and on ensuring that resettlement remains a strategic and effective tool for protection and solutions within the broader comprehensive refugee response. These efforts will be integral to the practical application of the CRRF and will help inform the development of the global compact on refugees.

II. Resettlement opportunities and achievements

5. In response to growing opportunities, UNHCR has significantly increased its resettlement activities over the past few years – from 74,800 submissions in 2012 to 134,000 in 2015 and 162,500 in 2016. This represents an increase of 21 per cent in 2016 compared to 2015 and more than a doubling of resettlement submissions since 2012.

6. In 2016, the majority of resettlement submissions were processed by UNHCR offices in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, with over 67,400 submissions (41 per cent), followed by Africa with 44,000 (27 per cent), Europe with 29,200 (18 per cent), Asia and the Pacific with 20,700 (13 per cent) and the Americas with 1,300 (less than 1 per cent). A third of the cases referred fell under the "legal and physical protection needs" category, followed by "survivors of violence and/or torture" (29 per cent), "lack of foreseeable alternative durable solutions" (19 per cent) and "women and girls at risk" (10 per cent). In terms of the urgency of resettlement cases, 194 cases (less than 1 per cent) were deemed an

“emergency priority” requiring evacuation in 72 hours, often with support from States with emergency transit facilities. About 2,700 (6 per cent) were considered as “urgent priority” cases requiring evacuation within weeks.

7. The situation in Syria and movement of refugees and migrants to Europe highlighted the need for States to share responsibility and offer safe pathways for refugees to receive protection outside the first country of asylum. A number of States offered more resettlement places in 2016, including France, Sweden, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America. Some 15,000 new places were confirmed during and immediately after the high level meeting on global responsibility-sharing through pathways for admission of Syrian refugees, convened by UNHCR in March 2016.

8. Additionally, a number of States, particularly in Europe, established new resettlement programmes. Many were encouraged to do so by a series of initiatives led by the European Union, where work is ongoing to establish a resettlement framework to provide a common approach to the arrival of persons in need of international protection. Other States, including Argentina and Brazil, made new commitments to the resettlement of Syrians in the context of the Leaders’ Summit on Refugees, which was convened in New York in September 2016.

9. Syrians continued to be the largest refugee group benefitting from resettlement in 2016, with more than 77,200 Syrians submitted, compared to 53,300 in 2015. Between 2013 and 2016, UNHCR submitted close to 157,000 Syrians for resettlement, of which the majority were to the United States (39 per cent) and Canada (24 per cent). The Democratic Republic of the Congo was the second highest country of origin for resettlement, with more than 22,800 refugees referred in 2016, mainly to the United States of America. Since the launch of the programme in 2012, over 80,000 Congolese have been submitted by UNHCR for resettlement. Other significant countries of origin in 2016 included Iraq (12,800), Somalia (10,500), Myanmar (10,100), Sudan (5,400) and Bhutan (5,400).

10. The main countries for UNHCR refugee referrals in 2016 were the United States of America (107,600), with 66 per cent of all submissions, followed by Canada (19,800), the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (8,800), France (4,600), Australia (4,600) and Norway (3,700).

11. To improve access to information on resettlement activities, UNHCR has developed a new resettlement data portal for internal as well as external users (www.unhcr.org/resettlement-data.html). The portal, which went live in early 2017, provides detailed resettlement statistics on a more regular basis and includes historical resettlement data going back to 2003.

III. Strengthening resettlement processing

12. Due to the generous response of Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America to the February 2016 supplementary appeal, UNHCR was able to recruit almost 200 new staff to further strengthen the Office’s processing capacity. Particular focus was given to training, capacity-building and strengthening the integrity of resettlement processing. Overall training activities in the area of resettlement also increased in 2016, with over 800 staff and affiliate workforce participating in learning programmes.

13. In addition, NGO partnerships under the UNHCR resettlement deployment scheme provided crucial support to the increase in global resettlement activities. Through the four NGO partners – the Danish Refugee Council, the International Catholic Migration Commission, the International Refugee Assistance Project and RefugePoint – more than 180 experts were deployed at any one time in 2016 to support resettlement activities. These

deployments were made possible due to funding from Canada, Norway, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America.

14. UNHCR intensified its efforts to mitigate, detect and address fraud in the resettlement process through close cooperation with the investigation unit of the Office of the Inspector General (IGO) and the United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS). Additional positions with a focus on caseload integrity were created in some field operations and special training-of-trainer sessions on investigating fraud committed by persons of concern were conducted. Four multi-functional anti-fraud missions were organized with staff from registration, refugee status determination and resettlement areas to help field operations increase their risk awareness and minimize fraud vulnerabilities. UNHCR's new internal policy and guidelines on addressing fraud committed by persons of concerns will also contribute to ongoing efforts to strengthen the integrity of the resettlement process.

15. The development of more streamlined processing modalities and increased use of biometrics in some operations, particularly in the MENA region, also contributed to the successful increase of resettlement processing in 2016. Innovative approaches to processing Syrian refugees were developed and refined to improve efficiency, while safeguarding the integrity of the process. The use of group processing for Congolese refugees identified for potential resettlement in the United States of America is another modality to expedite the processing of refugee referrals to States.

16. UNHCR will seek to capitalize on these recent developments to ensure that processes deliver their intended objectives. Notably, UNHCR has embarked on a project that aims to look more systematically at ways to strengthen the efficiency, consistency and predictability of the resettlement process without sacrificing quality. A comprehensive review and assessment of existing process modalities with recommendations for improvements is expected to be completed in the fall of 2017, with consultations, piloting and broader implementation taking place in 2018.

IV. Capacity building and partnership

17. As the number of resettlement States has steadily grown over the last few years, UNHCR has intensified its efforts to provide guidance and support in building resettlement programmes that are sustainable. The collaboration with the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland on the design of its "vulnerable children's resettlement scheme" is a good example of dialogue and cooperation.

18. The proposed European Union resettlement framework is a welcome initiative to provide a common approach to the safe and managed arrival of refugees and contribute to global resettlement efforts. UNHCR is committed to supporting these efforts, to help ensure alignment between global protection priorities and resettlement in the European Union. This will complement collaboration with new and emerging resettlement States to ensure the sustainability of programmes and best possible protection outcomes for the refugees concerned, including through the EU-FRANK project. This project aims to provide operational support to European Union member States in order to improve resettlement programmes and outcomes.

19. UNHCR is actively supporting two important global initiatives that were launched at the 2016 Leaders' Summit on Refugees to share experience and boost the capacity of States in the area of resettlement. The first initiative, the emerging resettlement country mechanism (ERCM), was established to facilitate strategic support and capacity-building efforts for new resettlement countries. The ERCM, a joint platform maintained by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and UNHCR, has already generated considerable financial support, including from Portugal, Sweden, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and

Northern Ireland and the United States of America, as well as interest from emerging resettlement countries and those with established resettlement programmes keen to share their experiences and best practices.

20. The second initiative was the global refugee sponsorship initiative (GRSI) – a partnership between the Canadian Government, the Open Society Foundations, the Radcliffe Foundation, UNHCR and the University of Ottawa – which seeks to promote and support the establishment of private and community sponsorship resettlement programmes to complement those supported by States. In addition to providing increased opportunities for protection and a durable solution for refugees, these sponsorship programmes strengthen the engagement of communities and civil society and create a more welcoming environment for refugees.

21. “New partnerships and approaches” is the theme for this year’s annual tripartite consultations on resettlement (ATCR), which brings together UNHCR, States, NGO partners and IOM to discuss global resettlement needs, priorities and challenges. UNHCR has worked closely with the current chair, New Zealand, to strengthen the ATCR and its working groups, aiming to make them more effective fora. Three working group meetings have been held since June 2016, leading to increased coordination and progress in key thematic areas related to resettlement: one on integration hosted by New Zealand in Auckland in February 2017; a second on integrity hosted by Australia and the United States of America in Geneva in March 2017; and a third on capacity-building hosted by Canada, also in Geneva in March 2017.

22. A number of context-specific core or contact groups on resettlement under the ATCR remained active throughout the year. The Syria core group met four times under Norwegian chairmanship, bringing together experts from 24 member States, 6 observer States, the European Union, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), IOM and UNHCR. The group continued to play an important role in mobilizing support for the resettlement of Syrian refugees. Through the active engagement of States, the core group model represents a vehicle for the realization of the objectives of the CRRF, including the expansion of the number and range of legal pathways, a broadening of criteria for resettlement and humanitarian admission programmes in mass displacement and protracted situations, the sharing of best practices and the facilitation of responsibility-sharing with host countries.

V. Conclusion

23. In the current context, resettlement continues to grow in importance as one of the core durable solutions, both as a tool for protection for some of the most vulnerable refugees whose protection needs cannot otherwise be met, as well as a tangible mechanism for responsibility-sharing among States. This was acknowledged in the New York Declaration, with States aiming to increase global resettlement opportunities in line with the needs identified by UNHCR.

24. With projections indicating that resettlement peaked in 2016 and the gap between global resettlement needs and available quotas is likely to increase in 2017, UNHCR will continue to work closely with States and other partners towards the realization of the commitments made in New York last September. In particular, UNHCR will focus on the following key resettlement activities in 2017: building the capacity of States to develop sustainable resettlement programmes; focusing on innovative resettlement processing, while building on progress made to strengthen integrity; and intensifying dialogue with resettlement States on protection priorities, including the strategic use of resettlement in the context of the CRRF.