

**Annual Consultations with NGOs - 2010**  
**Bureau for the Middle East and North Africa**  
**30 June - 9:00-10:45**

**Strengthening Partnerships in the Region**

Within the framework of strategic and comprehensive partnerships, the MENA Bureau aims at supporting States, civil society institutions and other relevant actors to ensure the protection of refugees and asylum seekers and to bridge the existing protection and assistance gaps, maintain an improved emergency response capacity to humanitarian crises as well as seek and implement solutions to refugee situations in the region.

The phenomenon of mixed migration movements constitutes a serious challenge for UNHCR operations in the North African sub-region. In an attempt to address this phenomenon, UNHCR is trying to encourage the national authorities to adopt separate asylum legislation and where possible to have incorporated asylum and refugee protection safeguards in the national legislation. Furthermore, it will continue to mitigate arrests, deportations and refoulement of persons of concern through various innovative activities e.g. establishment of lawyers network, and direct interventions by UNHCR protection staff at implicated police stations to reverse orders of arrest and removal.

UNHCR also continues to work closely with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to address statelessness in the region, and to bolster the joint activities and initiatives that were kickstarted in 2010 with the holding of a regional expert meeting on the subject. Likewise, the office will strengthen its coordination with UNRWA over the status of Palestinians, and particularly in identifying durable solutions for Palestinians ex-Iraq forced into displacement.

The MENA Bureau has embarked on the implementation of a comprehensive partnership strategy with the Gulf States seeking their political and humanitarian support as well as their financial contributions in order to broaden UNHCR's donor base. Partnerships with the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), the League of Arab States (LAS), the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), civil society institutions and prominent figures have been, and will be further strengthened to promote refugee rights in the region. The MENA Bureau has been deploying significant efforts, for instance, in support of an OIC ministerial conference on Refugees in the Muslim world, which is expected to take place in late 2010. Also, UNHCR is continuing its support to the Arab Parliamentarians for the updating of the 1994 draft Arab Convention on the Status of Refugees in the Arab Countries.

In the same context, a new Public Information strategy has been put in place for the Middle East and North Africa region. It is believed that the implementation of this strategy will enhance UNHCR's visibility in the region. The good coverage of UNHCR response to emergency situations and the high level missions, including those of the High Commissioner to the Middle East region has played an important role in projecting the humanitarian nature of UNHCR interventions, and enhancing visibility of UNHCR activities in the regional and international media, including in the Arab media.

Partnership is sought by UNHCR to ensure a collaborative and well-coordinated effort among all humanitarian actors at all times to be prepared and equipped with the means and resources to adequately respond to humanitarian situations. Strengthening strategic partnerships is meant to build an advanced solid humanitarian body that is capable of enhancing the quality of response mechanisms in a concerted and timely manner.