



UNHCR

GLOBAL CONSULTATIONS: LISTENING TO REFUGEE VOICES

The Global Consultations process was launched to revitalise the refugee protection regime. As key stakeholders in refugee protection, refugees have been involved in the Global Consultations to make sure that their voices are heard and views are taken into account. Given the diversity of views among refugees, those who are contributing to the process, needless to say, represent only a part of the refugee community. Nonetheless, their involvement is providing a vital reality check for other stakeholders. The following are some ways in which refugees are being included in the Consultations process.

Involvement of Refugees (status as of 1 November 2001)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• International Conference on the Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees (ICRIRR) – Norrköpping: 25–27 April 2001 ICRIRR is designed to provide an international forum for the exchange of ideas and means of supporting refugee resettlement among the 10 traditional and 8 emerging resettlement countries. Former refugees now in resettlement countries participated as speakers and delegates to ICRIRR. Issues discussed at the Conference are fed into the Global Consultations process (3rd track).
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Refugee Parliament” – Paris: 16 June 2001 Some 500 refugees gathered on 16 June 2001 in the French National Assembly to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the 1951 Convention. This “Refugee Parliament” adopted a declaration (<i>Paris Appeal</i>) that, among others, reaffirms the importance of the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol and calls upon States to respect refugee rights. The French National Assembly sent the <i>Paris Appeal</i> to the Presidents of Parliaments around the world.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dialogue with Refugee Women – Geneva: 20–22 June 2001 UNHCR in co-operation with the Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children organized Consultations with Refugee Women from 20–22 June 2001. The Consultations, held in Geneva, were part of a series of consultations with refugee women and other women of concern to UNHCR at the regional/country level. The Geneva meeting brought together some 50 women for a direct dialogue with UNHCR on a number of issues, some of them specifically linked to the Global Consultations, in order to ensure that refugee women’s realities and perspectives are brought into the debate. The consultations provided important input for assessment of existing policy and practice, and will contribute to increase effectiveness and equity.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Refugee voices at the Global Consultations meetings in Geneva or at the Regional Meetings<ul style="list-style-type: none">□ At the June third track meeting in Geneva, Aischa, a young refugee woman, spoke of her experience in seeking asylum, including a period of detention. Her direct testimony ended with a ringing plea of “Action, please,” on behalf of all refugees seeking asylum and a safe haven.□ At the Regional Meeting in Cairo, focusing on strengthening the capacity of first asylum countries in the region to offer adequate protection, a Somali refugee woman participated in the discussions.

- **“The Refugee Perspective” – Rouen: 14–16 September 2001**
Some 65 refugees hosted in Western and Central Europe participated in a three-day workshop which was held at the Institute of Social Development in Rouen (France). “The Refugee Perspective”, as the joint UNHCR-Institut-organized meeting was called, gave an immediacy to the Global Consultations process through the personal experiences and observations of refugees. Discussions, which focused on asylum procedures, voluntary repatriation and integration, led to a set of recommendations addressing key problems in each area (available on UNHCR’s website). The meeting also provided UNHCR with the opportunity to establish an informal network, which UNHCR intends to utilise as a “sounding board” for the development of people-oriented reception, protection and solutions policies in Europe.