

To: All Staff at Headquarters and the Field
From: The High Commissioner
Date: 11 September 2013
Title: Message from the High Commissioner on follow-up to Structured Dialogue with NGOs

Dear Colleagues,

In the face of many complex challenges, UNHCR must work in partnership with others and maximise complementarities in expertise, mandates, resources and capacity. Now more than ever, we need to invest in strategic teamwork and good partnership.

At the end of 2011, I invited NGOs and the IFRC to engage in a Structured Dialogue with UNHCR to review the quality of our partnership. This led to a number of recommendations to strengthen the application of partnership principles in practice, and to highlight areas where opportunities for closer and more strategic collaboration were strongest. These areas included advocacy, urban refugee situations, capacity development and the mobilisation of international support to meet the needs of IDPs.

Guidance notes were jointly developed by UNHCR and NGOs to support partnership at the field level, including approaches to problem resolution, improving strategic information sharing among partners and advocating for protection. A task team was established to explore and expand best practice for partnership in urban settings, extending the reach of UNHCR's steering group on urban refugee policy.

Many of the Structured Dialogue's recommendations were integrated and brought forward through various sessions on the agenda at the June 2013 Annual Consultations with NGOs. The theme of the Consultations was *Advocating together for protection*, and a useful special session focused on partnership approaches in advocacy.

Complementarities are key to achieving our common goal of protecting persons of concern. Taking advocacy as an example, we can often join forces with partners to ensure our efforts contribute to a common goal, even where we may need to say different things and with a different emphasis. We may also agree to disagree, which is why frank consultations in advance of advocacy initiatives are essential, to ensure that information is correct, that partners are not taken by surprise, and indeed, that partnership is based on trust and transparency. Both UNHCR and NGOs have committed to these principles.

It is now for Representatives and their teams in the field to carry forward the partnership recommendations from the Dialogue in their daily work with partners at the field level. I ask all UNHCR staff to lead by example, and to make special efforts to systematically listen to and consult with partners at all levels of the operation, engaging in a regular dialogue that goes beyond immediate issues around implementation and that systematically involves key partners in discussions on strategic direction.

The outcome document of the Structured Dialogue, including the recommendations and guidance notes, can help guide these efforts. They can be found on the UNHCR intranet, at https://intranet.unhcr.org/intranet/unhcr/en/home/support_services/humanitarian_partnerships0/bilateral_and_multilateral/ngos.html. The Interagency Unit at Headquarters is available to assist with any further queries and can be contacted at hqng00@unhcr.org.

Our donors will continue to carefully scrutinize how UNHCR engages in partnerships and coordination in the field. I count on your leadership and commitment to ensure the highest standards of engagement with all our partners.

António Guterres