



**UNHCR**

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees  
Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés

# Towards a global compact on refugees: a roadmap

(17 May 2017)

## 1. Introduction

1. At the Summit for Refugees and Migrants hosted by the General Assembly in New York on 19 September 2016, United Nations Member States unanimously adopted the “New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants”.<sup>1</sup> This landmark political declaration is directed at improving the way in which the international community responds to large movements of refugees and migrants, including protracted refugee situations.

2. Insofar as refugees are concerned, the New York Declaration strongly affirms the principles, standards and practices of the international refugee regime. Together, the commitments agreed to by Member States that apply to refugees reflect an understanding that protecting those who are forced to flee, and supporting the countries and communities that shelter them, are shared international responsibilities that must be borne more equitably and in a more predictable manner.

3. The New York Declaration contains three substantive sections with commitments that apply to both refugees and migrants, commitments specific to refugees and commitments specific to migrants. In addition, it includes Annex I, the “Comprehensive refugee response framework”, and Annex II, entitled “Towards a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration”.<sup>2</sup>

4. Annex I contains what Member States have agreed are the elements of “a framework for a comprehensive and people-centered refugee response” that is to be applied to “each situation involving large numbers of refugees”. It calls upon the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to initiate the application of this framework to a range of specific refugee situations and—in consultation with United Nations Member States and relevant stakeholders—tasks the High Commissioner with developing “a global compact on refugees” for inclusion in his annual report to the General Assembly in 2018 so that it can be considered by the General Assembly in conjunction with its annual resolution on the work of UNHCR.<sup>3</sup>

5. This document sets out the process that UNHCR will follow in order to fulfil the requests made by the General Assembly to apply the comprehensive refugee response framework and to develop a global compact on refugees.

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<sup>1</sup> General Assembly Resolution 71/1 (New York Declaration).

<sup>2</sup> Annex II to the New York Declaration calls for the development of “a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration”, the process for which is “separate, distinct and independent” from that of the development of the global compact on refugees, and is set out in modalities resolution A/71/L.58.

<sup>3</sup> See New York Declaration, Annex I, paragraphs 18 and 19.

## 2. Background

### *The New York Declaration and refugee protection*

6. The New York Declaration represents a milestone for global solidarity with refugees and the global refugee regime. In it, United Nations Member States recognize the unprecedented level of displacement currently being experienced, affirm the rights of refugees, and commit to enhancing the protection and durable solutions available to them, as provided for by the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. Member States express their determination to address the root causes of forced displacement, pledge to provide more predictable and sustainable support to refugees and the communities that host them, and agree to actively promote durable solutions for refugees, particularly in protracted refugee situations.

7. One of the most important issues addressed by the New York Declaration is responsibility-sharing; that is, the idea that the countries and communities that host large numbers of refugees should be supported in doing so by the international community. In the New York Declaration, Member States have made a strong, concrete statement of international commitment to share the responsibility for hosting and supporting the world's refugees more equitably.

We underline the centrality of international cooperation to the refugee protection regime. We recognize the burdens that large movements of refugees place on national resources, especially in the case of developing countries. To address the needs of refugees and receiving States, we commit to a more equitable sharing of the burden and responsibility for hosting and supporting the world's refugees, while taking account of existing contributions and the differing capacities and resources among States.<sup>4</sup>

8. The New York Declaration also lays the foundation for the international community to further consolidate and strengthen the international refugee regime through the application of the comprehensive refugee response framework contained in Annex I to each situation involving large movements of refugees, and through the development of a global compact on refugees.

### *The comprehensive refugee response framework*

9. Annex I sets out what Member States have agreed is “a framework for a comprehensive and people-centered refugee response, which is in accordance with international law and best international practice”.<sup>5</sup> This comprehensive refugee response framework is of universal application in that it will, with time, be applied to all situations involving large movements of refugees in accordance with the needs of the refugees in question and the countries and communities hosting them. The framework has four stated objectives, namely to:

- (a) ease pressures on host countries;
- (b) enhance refugee self-reliance;

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<sup>4</sup> New York Declaration, paragraph 68.

<sup>5</sup> New York Declaration, Annex I, paragraph 3.

- (c) expand access to third-country solutions; and
- (d) support conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity.<sup>6</sup>

10. Importantly, Member States indicate that comprehensive refugee responses should involve a multi-stakeholder, “whole-of-society” approach that includes “national and local authorities, international organizations, international financial institutions, regional organizations, regional coordination and partnership mechanisms, civil society partners, including faith-based organizations and academia, the private sector, media and the refugees themselves”.<sup>7</sup> In particular, the framework seeks to ensure more sustainable refugee responses by linking humanitarian and development efforts early on in a crisis, and by strengthening sustainable approaches that invest in the resilience of both refugees and local communities, including through investment in national and local systems wherever possible.

11. In Annex I, Member States commit to implementing the framework and request UNHCR to work with Member States and relevant stakeholders to apply the framework in a range of specific situations, to assess this implementation, and to consider the scope for refinement and further development.<sup>8</sup>

### 3. Towards a global compact on refugees

12. Annex I tasks the High Commissioner for Refugees to propose a global compact on refugees that is to be attached to his annual report to the General Assembly in 2018. This global compact on refugees is to be based on the comprehensive refugee response framework that Member States have outlined and the process of implementation, assessment and refinement that UNHCR has been asked to undertake.

#### *A global compact on refugees*

13. The global compact on refugees to be proposed by the High Commissioner will comprise two complementary parts:

- (i) the comprehensive refugee response framework, as agreed by Member States in Annex I to the New York Declaration, supplemented by preambular and concluding paragraphs; and
- (ii) a programme of action that sets out actions that can be taken—both by Member States and by other relevant stakeholders—to underpin the comprehensive refugee response framework, to ensure its full implementation, and to share more equitably the responsibility for implementing it.

#### *Part I: the comprehensive refugee response framework*

14. The four key pillars of the comprehensive refugee response framework relate to (i) reception and admission; (ii) support for immediate and ongoing needs; (iii) support for host countries and communities; and, (iv) durable solutions. It is important to note that

<sup>6</sup> New York Declaration, Annex I, paragraph 18.

<sup>7</sup> New York Declaration, Annex I, paragraph 2.

<sup>8</sup> New York Declaration, Annex I, paragraphs 17 and 18.

United Nations Member States have already agreed to and adopted the commitments contained in Annex I of the New York Declaration.

15. For this reason, it is envisaged that the global compact on refugees has as its core the agreed commitments contained in the comprehensive refugee response framework, with added preambular and closing paragraphs. The programme of action outlined below will facilitate and support the implementation of those commitments in specific countries and regional contexts.

*Part II: the programme of action*

16. The second part of the global compact on refugees will be a programme of action that will supplement the already agreed language of the comprehensive refugee response framework by providing concrete means for it to be operationalized. It will highlight best practices and set out actions that should be taken to bring about the kind of comprehensive refugee response envisaged by the New York Declaration, as well as identify gaps, operational or otherwise, that need to be addressed. Possible mechanisms for ensuring that the responsibility for hosting and supporting refugees is shared more equitably will be central to the programme of action.

17. The programme of action will not seek to impose additional obligations on States, but will rather seek to outline how existing obligations can best be fulfilled and—importantly—how the responsibility for performing those obligations can be more equitably shared. The programme of action will embrace the whole-of-society approach foreseen in the New York Declaration, and will thus include actions that can be taken by a wide range of actors to contribute to truly comprehensive responses.<sup>9</sup>

18. The text of the programme of action will be the subject of formal consultations with Member States and other relevant stakeholders, as detailed below. UNHCR will also propose ways in which the programme of action can be reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

*Lead-up activities toward the programme of action*

19. Activities will be undertaken as part of the development of the programme of action, in cooperation and consultation with Member States and other relevant stakeholders, in a number of interconnected areas, including through:

- (i) the application of the comprehensive refugee response framework to specific countries and situations, including by drawing lessons from existing or past refugee situations;
- (ii) thematic discussions that will inform the development of the programme of action; and
- (iii) a stocktaking of progress made and lessons learned that identifies best practices in refugee response, actions that are required to bring about the type of response envisaged in the New York Declaration, and areas for future development.

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<sup>9</sup> For example, in the area of reception and admission, the programme of action could provide concrete measures that hosting and non-hosting States, as well as other relevant stakeholders, could take to ensure that an emergency registration capacity is in place; that biometric systems are supported; and that personnel are trained and reception facilities are equipped to respond to specific needs.

20. Work on these complementary areas will continue until the global compact on refugees is adopted in 2018, as set out below.

(i) *Application of the comprehensive refugee response framework*

21. A key preparatory activity for the development of the programme of action is to take the text of the comprehensive refugee response framework that Member States have provided and to apply it to a range of specific countries and situations. This work is well underway. UNHCR has established a Task Team on Comprehensive Responses to identify refugee-hosting countries or refugee situations to which the comprehensive refugee response framework could be applied—in close consultation with the countries concerned—and to work with a wide range of stakeholders to apply it. In conjunction with United Nations Member States and relevant stakeholders, the Task Team will review the application of the framework, identifying good practices, as well as challenges and gaps that will inform the development of the programme of action.

22. In the application of the comprehensive refugee response framework, the whole-of-society approach is being utilized to strengthen existing partnerships—and to form new ones—between a wide range of actors, including regional organizations and coordination mechanisms, development actors (be they governmental, intergovernmental or from civil society), international financial institutions, and the private sector.

23. United Nations Member States and other relevant stakeholders will continue to be updated and consulted on the progress made in the application of the comprehensive refugee response framework on a regular basis, including through regular briefings in Geneva and New York.

(ii) *Thematic discussions*

24. In order to ensure that the perspectives of all Member States and relevant stakeholders are reflected in the programme of action, UNHCR will organize a series of thematic discussions aimed at identifying the actions that are essential to the type of refugee response envisaged in the New York Declaration. These discussions will embrace all four aspects of the comprehensive refugee response framework.

25. A series of thematic sessions will be held in Geneva during the course of 2017, as follows:

- (i) Past and current burden- and responsibility-sharing arrangements (10 July);
- (ii) Measures to be taken at the onset of a large movement of refugees (including the elements set out in the ‘Reception and admission’ section of the comprehensive refugee response framework) (17-18 October);
- (iii) Meeting needs and supporting communities (including the ‘Support for immediate and ongoing needs’ and ‘Support for host countries and communities’ sections of the framework) (17-18 October);
- (iv) Measures to be taken in pursuit of durable solutions (in accordance with the final section of the framework that bears the same name) (14-15 November); and
- (v) Issues that cut across all four substantive sections of the framework, and overarching issues (14-15 November).

26. Each session will commence with presentations from a panel drawn from representatives of Member States (including those that host large numbers of refugees) and other relevant stakeholders, such as experts and academics. This will be followed by an interactive dialogue that will focus on concrete measures that could be included in the programme of action.

27. UNHCR will also seek to utilize existing meetings, processes and conferences, such as the meeting of the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (ExCom) in October 2017 (to which all United Nations Member States are invited), to further identify measures that could be included in the programme of action. For example, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Summit provided a timely opportunity for reflection and commitments for the Somalia situation, as will the follow-up meeting to the San José Action Statement for countries impacted by the situation in the Northern Triangle of Central America. In addition, UNHCR's annual consultations with non-governmental organizations will be dedicated in 2017 to the theme "From global responsibility to local action – implementing the comprehensive refugee response framework". UNHCR would welcome the contribution of Member States and other stakeholders to the identification of other appropriate events and processes.

*(iii) Stocktaking: late 2017*

28. Although the application of the comprehensive refugee response framework and the holding of thematic discussions will continue until the global compact on refugees is adopted in 2018, UNHCR will invite Member States and other relevant stakeholders—including international and regional organizations, civil society, experts, academics and refugees—to join in taking stock of progress made in late 2017. The High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges in December 2017 will be dedicated to assessing progress made and identifying lessons learned during the preparatory work described above, and to laying the groundwork for the global compact on refugees.

#### **4. Formal consultations: commencing February 2018**

29. Based on this stocktaking of the application of the comprehensive refugee response framework, the thematic discussions, including the discussion at the High Commissioner's Dialogue, UNHCR will prepare a draft of the global compact on refugees by February 2018. UNHCR will share this draft with all United Nations Member States and relevant stakeholders for formal consultations. As indicated above, this draft will consist of two main parts: (i) the comprehensive response framework, including preambular and concluding paragraphs, and (ii) the programme of action.

30. UNHCR proposes that the formal consultations include all United Nations Member States, with the specialized and intergovernmental agencies with which the Secretary-General has established a working relationship and non-governmental organizations that have obtained consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council as observers. UNHCR envisages that there will be four sessions of formal consultations, hosted in Geneva, as follows:

- (i) February/March 2018;
- (ii) April 2018;
- (iii) May 2018; and
- (iv) June/July 2018.

31. In addition to these formal consultations, there will be discussions with other relevant stakeholders, including refugees, experts, academics and the private sector, whose input will be channeled into the formal consultations. Relevant reports and position papers will be shared in advance with Member States and other stakeholders.

32. A calendar of key roadmap events is attached as an Annex.

33. As foreshadowed by the New York Declaration, and as outlined above, the High Commissioner will include the global compact on refugees, reflecting the outcome of the formal consultations, in his annual report to the General Assembly in 2018 so that it can be considered by the General Assembly at its seventy-third session in conjunction with its annual resolution on UNHCR. The Office envisages that the global compact on refugees could be annexed to the resolution.

## **5. Conclusion**

34. The New York Declaration and the envisaged global compact on refugees represent a remarkable commitment to international cooperation to share responsibilities more equitably and in a more predictable manner in the face of large movements of refugees and protracted refugee situations. UNHCR looks forward to working with Member States and other relevant stakeholders to transform these important commitments into action, for the benefit of refugees and the countries and communities that host them.

*UNHCR, 17 May 2017*

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## **Annex**

### **Roadmap (as of 17 May 2017)**

The following table sets out a roadmap of meetings that are to be dedicated to the thematic discussion, stocktaking and formal consultation elements of the process leading to the development of the global compact on refugees.

#### ***I. Thematic discussions (2017)***

10 July	<u>Thematic discussion 1:</u> Past and current burden-and responsibility-sharing arrangements
17-18 October	<u>Thematic discussions 2 and 3:</u> Measures to be taken at the onset of a large movement of refugees and meeting needs and supporting communities
14-15 November	<u>Thematic discussions 4 and 5:</u> Measures to be taken in pursuit of durable solutions and issues that cut across all four substantive sections of the framework, and overarching issues

#### ***II. Stocktaking (2017)***

12-13 December	High Commissioner's Dialogue
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#### ***III. Formal consultations (2018)***

Feb/March	Formal consultation 1
April	Formal consultation 2
May	Formal consultation 3
June/July	Formal consultation 4