

11 December 2012

The High Commissioner's Structured Dialogue on NGOs – UNHCR Partnership

Advocating together for the protection of persons of concern

To achieve positive protection outcomes for refugees, internally displaced persons, returnees, and stateless people, UNHCR, the RC/RC movement, and NGOs must work together. Recognizing both the complementarities and the distinctions between our mandates and positions within the international humanitarian system, we strive for mutual respect, trust, transparency, and understanding. We commit to increasing collaboration in the development and implementation of our advocacy positions and strategies, including through ensuring timely and meaningful NGO participation and a joint commitment to share critical and timely information. UNHCR, the RC/RC movement, and NGOs seek to strengthen our advocacy competencies and pay particular attention to the principles and sensitivities of engaging with national and local actors, including governments, on protection concerns, as well as undertaking risk assessments to ensure that advocacy Does No Harm. With advocacy partnerships for protection in complex emergencies and natural disasters best fostered within country-level protection clusters and the Global Protection Cluster, we will promote a similarly collaborative approach to advocacy for protection in refugee and statelessness situations. We agree that advocacy is an area wherein UNHCR and INGOs have joint responsibility to invest in the capacity and activities of local actors, including faith actors and community-based organizations.

Recommendations for Next Steps

1. Highlighting that working together requires trust, transparency and inclusive processes, NGOs, the RC/RC movement and UNHCR recognize that the existing humanitarian coordination architecture, including the Global Protection Cluster and country protection clusters, is a crucial means for developing and implementing advocacy strategies for protection of persons of concern in humanitarian and complex crises. While appreciating UNHCR's unique responsibilities that result from its mandate, NGOs, the RC/RC movement and UNHCR agree to enhanced collaboration in developing advocacy positions and strategies concerning refugees and stateless persons.
2. Recognizing that the pursuit of positive partnership is crucial for maximizing the impact of advocacy, UNHCR, the RC/RC movement and NGOs agree to develop a guidance note on advocacy during 2013, which includes advocacy for the protection of refugees, stateless, and internally displaced persons at the country, regional, and international levels. The drafting should follow from joint reflection on successful advocacy efforts and a stocktaking of problematic cases, and the drafters should consider how to best engage NGOs at the field and international levels in the formulation of refugee and protection policy that underpins these advocacy efforts. The note should outline best practices, including building on the comparative advantages of NGOs, the RC/RC movement and UNHCR and suggest modalities for maximizing the impact of advocacy through partnerships that reflect principles of transparency, participation, mutual respect, shared interest and accountability.
3. Understanding the investment of time and joint thought needed to further debate, agree upon, and implement these recommendations, as well as the importance of re-energizing and, if necessary, re-tooling existing mechanisms, UNHCR and NGOs recommend that the one-day

Dialogue on Protection, previously organized in connection to the Annual NGO Consultations, be resumed in 2013. The first resumed Dialogue should be used as a forum for the reflection and stocktaking exercises necessary to begin implementing the advocacy-related recommendations from this High Commissioner's Structured Dialogue on Partnership.

4. Acknowledging that working together requires open communication and information exchange for effective partnership, trust, and transparency, NGOs, the RC/RC movement and UNHCR will explore their mutual expectations for information-sharing and handling and draft a concise guidance note on this in the first half of 2013. The note will include a statement on the importance of information sharing for partnership and detail the types of information to be shared, that are needed by whom, the expected timeframe, relevant confidentiality protocols, and means for ways to follow up if needed information is not being shared.