

Oral update on ExCom Conclusion

StandCom, 21 September 2017

Excellencies, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am grateful to have the opportunity to orally brief the Standing Committee for the third time since we embarked on the process relating to the ExCom conclusion on machine-readable travel documents for refugees and stateless persons.

Since my last update to this Committee on 29 June 2017, we have held 2 additional negotiation sessions on 11 and 12 September 2017. I would have hoped today to be able to announce that a consensus had been reached. But although we have made considerable headway on a significant amount of issues, there still remains one outstanding matter that requires further consultations among delegations. I am therefore concentrating all my efforts as facilitator on this point.

Colleagues,

As machine readable travel documents are a technical issue, the scope of the conclusion should remain within that realm. Political considerations should not prevent us from reaching agreement on this conclusion. Let us remind ourselves that the goal of this conclusion is to acknowledge the crucial importance of travel documents in the context of protection of refugees and stateless persons and to encourage States to take measures in this regard. No more, but certainly no less.

I believe that consensus is possible. I therefore appeal to delegations to walk this last mile, bearing in mind that we may achieve our respective goals with language that is not necessarily our ideal position, but thinking about the “greater good” we are trying to achieve. The greater good representing here a consensus within UNHCR’s governing body on a matter that may have a real and positive impact on the lives of refugees and stateless persons.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have engaged constructively and fruitfully in negotiating this conclusion on machine readable travel documents. I want to believe that this was not an effort in vain and that the ExCom will be in a position to adopt a conclusion next week. This very last step is within our reach. Let us not fail in the lead up to the overarching endeavour of the Global Compact on refugees.

I thank you.