

69th meeting of the Standing Committee
Agenda item 5:
Follow-up to the New York Declaration and the comprehensive refugee response framework

Remarks of Daniel Endres
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Mister Chair, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

It has been a little over three months since we last convened in this forum, and just over nine months since the UN General Assembly adopted the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants.

I welcome this opportunity to outline what UNHCR, its partners and, most importantly, Member States have achieved thus far in the practical application of the New York Declaration and, specifically, its comprehensive refugee response framework.

As reported in the conference room paper, in nine months, nine States have begun leading the application of a comprehensive refugee response in their countries. These are Costa Rica, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Somalia, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania. And eight of these States have further agreed to pursue a comprehensive regional approach, which will strengthen cross-border cooperation and coherence in meeting regional challenges and seizing regional opportunities.

The conference room paper provides detail on the progress in each country. I would now like to share some reflections on the path we have travelled in these first 9 months, and what we have learned.

One question we frequently hear is, “What is different? What is new in the CRRF?”

We know that the CRRF reaffirms and is rooted in the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees; we know that it reflects and consolidates many of the protection and solutions-oriented operational practices that we jointly have developed in recent years – such as, for example, the imperative of an age, gender and diversity approach in all planning and interventions, or the empowerment and protection benefits of cash-based interventions.

Indeed, what is new? While one can highlight many things, I would like to highlight three fundamental aspects which we believe are game-changers.

First: the CRRF is a political statement and commitment sanctioned at the highest levels. It was unanimously agreed and adopted by all UN member States as the way that we – the entire international community – should engage more predictably and comprehensively to deliver protection and solutions for refugees. By its terms, it is universal in its application, while being adaptable to each context.

Second: the CRRF clarifies that humanitarian action alone cannot resolve humanitarian crises. In this, it builds on the imperative of addressing root causes and resolving conflicts. It recognizes the pivotal role of key development actors, including international financial institutions, and that attaining the 2030 sustainable development goals – and the imperative to ‘leave no one behind’ – necessarily entails addressing the development consequences of forced displacement. This requires us to

consider refugees not in isolation, but rather in the communities where they find protection. It requires us to respond to large movements of refugees not only from a “humanitarian angle”, but as opportunities to engage with refugees and their hosts, together, to build resilience and self-reliance. It also prompts us to call upon the knowledge and capacities of the private sector.

The third aspect is not what the CRRF asks, or demands, of the international community, but what major host countries have already done. At the Leaders’ Summit for Refugees, which was convened one day after the adoption of the New York Declaration, 17 host countries made fundamental commitments to refugees’ inclusion in their societies through, for example, greater access to work and education, freedom of movement and residence, and access to national services. Member States have already started implementing these changes. Djibouti’s transformative new refugee law is an impressive example, as is Ethiopia’s roadmap for the implementation of its nine pledges. In both cases, these progressive commitments provide a foundation for the application of the CRRF. They are commitments that now should be predictably and equitably supported by the international community.

Excellencies, distinguished delegates: as the 101 Member States of the UNHCR’s Executive Committee, you are leading the pursuit of protection and solutions for refugees. The CRRF also speaks to you in this role. The commitments Member States have undertaken in the CRRF reflect the diversity and richness of potential State action on behalf of refugees. Beyond being both hosts and donors, States are humanitarian partners. They are development actors. They facilitate trade and investment. They work to protect the environment, enhance the empowerment of women and youth, and address the needs of people with disabilities.

Some States are considering these diverse ways of engaging in comprehensive responses and consciously pursuing what we call a “whole-of government” approach. We welcome Japan’s and Germany’s efforts in this regard, as well as the strong humanitarian-development cooperation evidenced by ECHO and DEVCO in the European Union. A number of development agencies – including JICA, Swedish Sida, BMZ and DFID – are mobilizing support and expertise in CRRF countries, including in deep field locations.

In its call for more equitable-responsibility sharing, the CRRF recognizes that the provision of international protection and durable solutions for refugees is a global public good. As members of UNHCR’s Executive Committee, your concrete and practical engagement will contribute to a more equitable and predictable collective response.

For its part, UNHCR is also engaged in a process of addressing what the CRRF means institutionally and operationally. A second question we frequently hear is, “What does the CRRF mean for UNHCR?”

The CRRF seeks to secure a much broader coalition of partners – including development actors and the private sector. In this, we need to be clear that UNHCR will not become a development actor or, further still, cede the centrality of protection in all refugee responses.

The engagement of other actors – with their expertise, competencies, resources and innovation – will contribute to the productive inclusion of refugees in their host communities. This will enable UNHCR have an even stronger focus on refugee protection, to support a more predictable humanitarian response and strengthen data collection and management. In this regard, UNHCR’s Strategic Directions for the period 2017-2021, which were finalized after the New York Declaration, elaborate UNHCR’s five core areas of engagement: protection; responding in emergencies and beyond; promoting inclusion and self-reliance; empowering those we serve; and the pursuit of solutions.

Before closing, I would like to mention two events that have taken place since the conference room paper was sent to you.

Last Friday, the President of Uganda and the UN Secretary-General hosted the Uganda Solidarity Summit, which was attended by more than 800 delegates. With its inclusive refugee hosting policy, Uganda is applying the key principles of the CRRF, and this has been globally recognized. To support Uganda in coping with the largest refugee influx of 2017, donors have committed more than US\$ 400 million.

The second event, held one week earlier, was our Annual NGO Consultations – a cornerstone event in our annual programme, which now brings together over 500 members of civil society representing some 300 organizations from all around the globe. This year the Consultations were dedicated to exploring how collectively we can ensure that all elements of the CRRF inform every refugee response.

You will have an opportunity to discuss the conclusions and recommendations of the Consultations when the NGO Rapporteur reports to you during the annual session of the Executive Committee in October. Let me briefly touch upon two key points from those three days:

- (1) Many NGOs – including local and national NGOs – have already begun collecting experience, offering recommendations and sharing good practices that we are now seeking to share more widely.

We are immensely grateful for the insight and dedication shown by these partners, not only in their daily work with refugees, but also in their commitment to engage in this collective effort of the international community to strengthen, systematically, how we respond to large movements of refugees for the benefit of refugees and host communities alike.

We will continue to monitor progress and are collecting experience and good practices from countries applying the CRRF as well as other countries and contexts, such as the Syria and Afghan situations, among others. We will do so during the upcoming thematic discussions in July, October and November, as well as during the High Commissioner’s Dialogue in December. And we are seeking to ensure that those not physically present in Geneva can participate and have their voices heard. The thematic discussions will be webcast, and a link is available on UNHCR’s website where interested parties can post their contributions to each thematic discussion.

- (2) A second key point emerging from the NGO Consultations was a strong commitment to better enable the inclusion of refugees and host communities’ voices.

The CRRF expressly recognizes that “refugees themselves” – their voices and their participation – must inform and contribute to the development of the comprehensive refugee response. Together with NGOs, we have initiated pilot consultations with refugees in four countries. We will be taking these consultations forward in the coming months, ensuring that their outcomes feed into the High Commissioner’s Dialogue and the development of the global compact on refugees.

In closing, I must highlight the enthusiasm, the willingness, and the sense of imperative, of so many actors and partners who are now engaged in the application of the CRRF.

Thank you, Chair.