

UPDATE ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGENDA FOR PROTECTION

I. PURPOSE

1. This information note is to update the Standing Committee on further feedback received from States on the implementation of the Agenda for Protection since the 59th Session of the Executive Committee in October 2008.

II. BACKGROUND

2. The Agenda for Protection¹ and its Programme of Action, which resulted from the Global Consultations on International Protection,² set out an agreed framework for pursuing protection priorities globally. It was endorsed in 2002 by UNHCR's Executive Committee and welcomed by the General Assembly.³ Upon its adoption, the Executive Committee recognized that implementation of the Agenda would be a multi-year undertaking. While in the past, updates on progress achieved have been provided by UNHCR, as well as by some States, until recently there had not been a review of the efforts undertaken by all concerned stakeholders in this respect.

3. At the 42nd meeting of the Standing Committee in June 2008, UNHCR announced a plan to elicit country perspectives on progress made in implementing the Agenda at the national level.⁴ UNHCR country offices were requested to contact their Government counterparts, and share with them a matrix on the goals, objectives and activities of the Agenda. Using the matrix to review and assess progress made towards specific Agenda objectives and remaining challenges, States were encouraged to reflect on their own performance both nationally and globally in the pursuit of protection objectives.

4. Different approaches were used to complete the matrix depending on the national context. Whenever possible, the exercise served to nurture comprehensive dialogues on protection. The approaches have ranged from a one-off interaction between the UNHCR country office and its relevant government counterparts on the matrix itself or its results, to more comprehensive national consultations in the form of a workshop around protection objectives, bringing in a fuller range of stakeholders. In Yemen, for instance, UNHCR facilitated a round-

¹ *Agenda for Protection*, Third edition, October 2003, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4714a1bf2.html>.

² UNHCR launched the Global Consultations on International Protection in late 2000 to engage States and other partners in a broad-ranging dialogue on refugee protection. The aim was to explore how best to revitalize the existing international protection regime while ensuring its flexibility to address new problems. The Agenda for Protection is one of the outcomes of the Global Consultations.

³ United Nations General Assembly, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees A/RES/57/187, 18 December 2002, paragraph 6. <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3f4354364.html>.

⁴ See: UNHCR, *Note on the Agenda for Protection*, EC/59/SC/CRP.12, 2 June 2008, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4868f5f42.html>.

table with all relevant Government agencies, during which protection challenges were discussed for the first time in such a comprehensive manner. Discussions also took place with UNHCR in a number of other countries, including Burundi and Sudan. In another instance, it was reported that the exercise was an eye-opener for the responsible authorities, as it demonstrated that refugee protection goes far beyond deciding on refugee applications.

III. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS UP TO MAY 2009

5. The Executive Committee at its 58th session welcomed UNHCR's initiative to commence a review of achievements made under the Agenda for Protection, as well as to identify outstanding challenges and assist States, upon request, to devise national plans of action in a consultative and inclusive manner with the aim of enhancing the international protection of refugees and others of concern on the basis on the Agenda. The Executive Committee furthermore encouraged States to take part in this process in a consultative and inclusive manner with relevant stakeholders and actors.

6. 42 countries submitted their replies to the matrix in time for the 59th session of the Executive Committee in October 2008. Thereafter, UNHCR received further contributions from Belgium, Croatia, Lithuania and Namibia, bringing the total number of countries which have reported on their implementation of the Agenda for Protection by means of the matrix to 46.

7. The content of the matrices provided up to 1 October 2008 were reflected in a *Preliminary Summary Report on Feedback by States on Their Implementation of the Agenda for Protection*, which was made available to delegations at the back of the room during the 59th session of the Executive Committee in October 2008.

8. The summary report did not assess the state of implementation of the Agenda for Protection by individual States in detail. Rather, its aim was to provide an overview of implementation by States, as well as an analysis of selected objectives for each of the six goals of the Agenda for Protection, based on the priorities highlighted in the feedback by States and issues identified as most challenging. Overall, the reports reflected a strong commitment to the goals, objectives and activities contained in the Agenda.

9. The reports have provided UNHCR with valuable information on ongoing policies, practices and action taken to implement the Agenda for Protection. Some reports go further and highlight the challenges of protection delivery on the ground. Several States ventured to make recommendations on policy, legal, administrative or operational gaps. For the most part, however, the reports have tended to be descriptive rather than analytical.

10. As for the Agenda for Protection itself, the reports received solidly reinforce its validity and relevance. States taking part in the exercise have acknowledged that, while considerable progress has been made in some areas, a number of Agenda objectives are still far from being fully achieved. While much of the action required to advance the Agenda for Protection has to take place at the national level, some of the more challenging issues highlighted in this report would merit more concerted efforts at the regional or global level. This could be in the form of informal consultations or discussions, including through the High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges, new thematic Executive Committee Conclusions, or other appropriate initiatives.