



UNHCR

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

Regional Cooperative Approach to address Refugees, Asylum-Seekers and Irregular Movement

UNHCR Discussion Paper

1. Background and Context

Population movements in the Asia-Pacific region are complex and multi-layered with people coming into, as well as moving within, the region for a variety of reasons. Economic and social factors are at times a driving force, particularly given the demand by emerging economies for foreign labour. The region includes a mix of labour producing and labour receiving countries; with some countries simultaneously experiencing both types of labour migration. Conversely, some population movements are triggered by human rights situations or humanitarian crises. And still other movements, while largely protection motivated, also contain economic dimensions.

In this context, States in the Asia-Pacific region have recognized the need to address mixed and irregular movements of people in the region more effectively. The Bali Process Third Ministerial Conference in April 2009 revived its Ad Hoc Group mechanism precisely to develop practical responses at the regional level to assist countries to respond to increased irregular movements and to enhance information sharing between affected countries.¹

Most recently in June of 2010, the Bali Process Ad Hoc Group held a Protection Workshop to examine more closely the important issue of protection within the broader context of the irregular movement of people. In the Bali Process Senior Officials Meeting that directly followed, participants endorsed and agreed “to immediately commence work to take forward a UNHCR co-hosted workshop to develop a coordinated and comprehensive regional approach to refugees and irregular movements, including secondary movements”.²

2. Challenges and Benefits of Closer Regional Cooperation

The forced and voluntary movement of people into and through the Asia-Pacific region is not a new phenomenon. It raises a number of common concerns that affect all States in the region:

- national security and orderly management of migration/borders;
- human security for people affected (especially refugees, asylum-seekers, women, children, trafficked persons and other groups with specific needs);
- transnational crime;
- unnecessary tensions in relations between States.

¹ Third Regional Ministerial Conference, *Co-Chairs’ Statement*, para. 28, April 2009, available at: http://www.baliprocess.net/files/Co%20chairs%20statement%20BRMC%20III_FINAL.doc.

² Third Meeting of Ad Hoc Group Senior Officials, *Co-Chairs’ Statement*, para. 11, June 2010, available at: <http://www.baliprocess.net/files/Co-Chairs%20statement%20AHG%20SOM%2010%20to%2011%20June%202010.doc>.

States have a legitimate right and, indeed, responsibility, to define their own migration policies and to protect their borders as a matter of national security. One practical aspect of this is the right to combat smuggling and trafficking in persons. While ensuring that perpetrators of smuggling and trafficking are detained and prosecuted, mechanisms are required, not only from a legal but also from a humanitarian perspective, to address the needs of the victims. Such mechanisms can be designed in a way that they are compatible with national security concerns.

However, experience suggests that, on their own, border control or counter-smuggling efforts are not effective because they:

- tend to deflect/divert the problem to other State(s), which can lead to tensions and misunderstandings between States;
- allow the situation to be exploited by people smugglers and trafficking rings;
- do not address the root causes of irregular movement, which are complex and multidimensional and which have both a ‘State security’ and a ‘human security’ dimension;
- do not recognize that refugee movements are, almost by definition, disorderly and irregular;
- do not address the situation of victims of smuggling and trafficking to whom all States and the international community have special responsibilities.

In addressing complex mixed movements, practical cooperative solutions are needed that consider the phenomenon comprehensively, and at every stage of movement. This includes ensuring access to international protection for those in need, as well as providing appropriate and effective outcomes for others. It is important that this not be done in any manner which would inadvertently encourage onward movements or create pull factors. With this in mind, the sustainable, timely return of persons found not to be in need of international protection is a priority. A common regional cooperation framework which addresses key elements identified as being to the benefit for all (“win-win”) could accordingly complement and reinforce comprehensive national policies in this area.

3. Proposal for a “Regional Cooperation Framework”

In response to the request of the Ad Hoc Group of the Bali Process, and to provide participants at the forthcoming workshop in Manila with a framework within which ideas for practical cooperation might be discussed, UNHCR proposes the development of elements of a **Regional Cooperation Framework (RCF)**. This would provide a more predictable yet flexible way in which States, UNHCR, IOM and other stakeholders might come together to develop practical arrangements that would respond to, and manage, specific situations of mixed movement. An inclusive but non-binding framework could:

- assist States to develop more coherent and predictable responses to refugees and irregular movements in the region;
- provide a reference point through which support from States outside the region could be engaged; as well as for more targeted, “value-added” support from UNHCR, IOM and other relevant stakeholders;

- support the development of a set of focused, practical cooperative measures which could, over time, ensure a clearer and fairer distribution of responsibilities among States for refugees, asylum-seekers and irregular movements in the region.

Such an approach would have the valuable benefit of:

- focusing on practical concerns of and solutions for States which are currently hosting refugees and asylum-seekers;
- providing a more supportive environment for the protection of people in need;
- assisting to decrease disparities of treatment of persons in need through harmonization;
- providing real disincentives for human smuggling and trafficking.

The RCF would be a package of inter-linked mechanisms and initiatives which together would achieve the goals set out above. As a starting point, the RCF could contain a set of **Common Understandings** that would provide the broad underpinnings of good practices and sound collaboration between States. These common understandings could be supplemented by **situation-specific practical cooperative arrangements**, as well as **regional support functions** to assist States on an operational level. Further detail on these possible elements of the RCF is provided in Parts 4 and 5, below.

4. Areas for Common Understandings

As a broad “umbrella” for any discussions on closer regional cooperation, a starting point might be for participating States to identify general, or common, considerations that they all share, over and above the specificities of their own national context. These Common Understandings would be developed and “owned” by States, targeted towards regional specificities and respectful of the legitimate national concerns of each State, as well as international refugee and human rights law. They would be developed in a spirit of equitable burden and responsibility sharing between participating States.

Based on UNHCR’s experience with the 10-Point Plan of Action for Refugee Protection and Mixed Migration,³ and similar collaborative strategies developed by States around the world,⁴ a series of Common Understandings might cover the following areas.

4.1 Developing practical cooperation among partners

As indicated above, comprehensive approaches based on cooperation between States and other partners can offer a better range of options and solutions to address complex issues relating to refugees, asylum-seekers and irregular movements as compared to bilateral and unilateral action.

³ UNHCR, “Refugee Protection and Mixed Migration: A 10-Point Plan of Action”, 1 January 2007, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/protect/PROTECTION/4742a30b4.pdf>.

⁴ See outcomes from Regional Conferences on Refugee Protection and International Migration in Sana’a, Yemen (May, 2008); Dakar, Senegal (November, 2008); San José, Costa Rica (November, 2009); and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania (September, 2010). Further information available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/4a16aac66.html>.

Inter alia, cooperative approaches can:

- ensure more coherence and consistency in approaches between different States – in particular, harmonized approaches can reduce incentives for irregular onward movement (and, correspondingly, limit smuggling and trafficking);
- encourage engagement from national partners, civil society and their regional counterparts, including to mitigate the impact of migration on local communities, and prevent actual or perceived “special treatment” for refugees and asylum-seekers;
- provide a channel for the pooling of resources both to develop effective responses within the region; as well as for States and stakeholders outside the region to provide support (political/diplomatic, humanitarian, financial, aid, logistic, etc);
- provide an ongoing platform for States to discuss and develop practical responses to specific issues of common concern.

4.2 “Protection sensitive” migration management practices

- *Identification, registration, documentation, profiling and referral*

States have a right and responsibility to identify, register and track (through appropriate documentation) persons on their territory. Indeed, robust migratory policies, coupled with national and regional security concerns, require accurate knowledge of who is on one’s territory, who is allowed to remain and who should be requested to leave.

Cooperative approaches could ensure that common information is collected by partners in the region in a way that facilitates data and information exchange for purposes of enhancing national/regional security, effective migration management and developing targeted responses. Practical protocols could be developed to allow participating States to share information wherever possible, while respecting confidentiality concerns. UNHCR is committed to sharing its specific expertise on data collection and analysis for the purpose of enhancing the protection of persons of concern to the Office.

Establishing non-binding profiling and referral mechanisms to identify and differentiate between different categories of persons soon after arrival in host States can enable States to immediately identify and refer (to the appropriate procedures/channels), persons seeking asylum, as well as those not needing international protection and others with specific needs.

- *Differentiated processes and procedures*

While States have responsibilities under international law towards persons in need of international protection, not everybody who arrives irregularly in a State will have such needs. By developing differentiated processes and procedures for various categories of people, States can ensure effective and fair access to asylum for those with claims for international protection, while providing efficient and timely outcomes to others, including return as appropriate.

Each State has differing priorities and concerns that will require procedures adapted to its national context. However, the establishment of similar or standardized procedures for

different categories of persons throughout the region could limit push and pull factors that feed onward movements, ensure fairer distributions of responsibilities between States and mobilize support from States and other partners outside the region.

- *Addressing disparities in standards of treatment for refugees and asylum seekers*

The prospect of detention, expulsion, indefinite delays, poor standards of reception and inadequate conditions of living are principal drivers of onward secondary movements for refugees and asylum-seekers. These factors can also create safety and security issues for host countries, and tensions with local communities. Both secondary movement and such security concerns can be reduced if refugees and asylum-seekers have access to conditions of safety and dignity at all stages of their stay and while they await clarity on their future. Secondary movement will also be less likely if regional understandings are developed that ensure that standards of treatment for specific groups are reasonably comparable. Such agreements, particularly where they explicitly abide by established international standards, could also help in mobilizing international support and assistance, which can in turn alleviate the burden on host communities.

- *Addressing Irregular Onward Movements*

A key objective of cooperation between participating States in the region is to reduce irregular onward movement by asylum-seekers and refugees from one participating State to another. This will also necessarily undermine the exploitative practices of people smuggling and human trafficking.

Suggestions for reducing irregular onward movement, drawing on the elements already outlined in this discussion paper, include:

- better information exchange of data and analysis between States to prevent identity abuse;
- more uniform and consistent asylum procedures to reduce “forum” or “venue” shopping;
- more uniform and consistent standards of treatment for asylum-seekers;
- timely solutions that ease the burden on host States and their local communities and provide practical and principled outcomes for people affected.

Once regionally consistent and coherent processes and practices have been established, then States can better determine, in practical ways, where the responsibility lies for the processing of individual cases under these arrangements. Under certain circumstances, which would need to be further defined, this might involve practical cooperation on issues such as readmission or transfer from the territory of one participating State to that of another.

Given the high incidence of irregular maritime movements within parts of the region and the complexity of issues involved, the issue of *people moving irregularly by sea* may form a sub-category of onward movers with a special set of needs and requirements that could merit a dedicated regional understanding. Whereas differentiated procedures for sea

arrivals have strong merit, the impact of such processes on each State and on the region as a whole would need to be carefully analyzed to avoid inadvertently contributing to increased secondary movements by shifting responsibilities.

4.3 Developing Realistic Solutions and Stabilizing Populations

Better cooperation between States, in a spirit of regional burden and responsibility sharing, could ensure that effective and timely solutions/outcomes are provided for individuals involved in irregular mixed movements. Realistic and comprehensive solutions to various situations of mixed movement involve different processes, to be undertaken simultaneously, with a long-term perspective and commitment:

- Increased support from third countries to resettle refugees in a timely fashion so they are not left 'in limbo' and in the sole care and responsibility of host States.
- Closer cooperation on the return/removal of people found not to be in need of international protection - perhaps supported by return incentives, development aid packages and humanitarian reintegration assistance to places/regions of return.
- Exploring in-country solutions for selected groups or individuals. These might include refugee protection systems, labour migration schemes, family reunion or other local opportunities that benefit both the host State and the individuals concerned.
- Addressing root causes through "in-country" support for national initiatives in countries/regions of origin.

For countries that are experiencing difficulties that are leading to large-scale population movements, progress on return is likely to take time. The first stage in moving toward conditions for return is stabilization of the population both in the country of origin and in countries of asylum, in conditions that will not fuel onward movements. Focusing on stabilization of populations is an essential component of managing situations of mixed movements on a regional basis.

It is also important to avoid creating conditions in countries of asylum that attract people who otherwise would remain at home to leave their country. The prospect of resettlement to a third State can be one such factor. Used in a strategic, targeted way for well-defined groups resettlement can, however, be an important protection tool.

5. Conclusions

5.1 International support and burden sharing, including appropriate roles for UNHCR, IOM and other stakeholders

The foundation of any effective cooperation in the region is the ownership, commitment and active engagement of participating States, based on mutual respect for their sovereignty and security.

In the short- to medium-term, support and assistance from the international community, including UNHCR, IOM, States with developed asylum and migration management

systems, and other entities, will be both desirable and necessary. This could include, as appropriate, providing advice, technical support, financial and human resources, and guidance as to how collaborative arrangements could best be implemented. However, such international support would be on a transitional basis in the sense that it would aim to strengthen the capacity of sovereign States.

5.2 *Situation-specific cooperative arrangements*

A RCF would provide a basis for interested States to come together to establish targeted, practical cooperative arrangements to address specific situations of mixed movements, with the support from UNHCR, IOM and other relevant stakeholders.

Consistent with the goals of the RCF, such cooperative arrangements would be developed on the basis of mutual respect for the sovereignty of participating States. They would be designed to achieve an equitable and principled distribution of responsibilities between each participating State, as well as fair and effective outcomes for the individuals concerned.

Two scenarios that are currently being faced by States in the region and where practical regional cooperation could initially be considered are outlined in **Annex 1**.

5.3 *Regional Support Functions*

In addition to identifying common understandings that most States in the region would recognise as relevant to their national situation, a RCF could provide a basis for interested States to come together to develop Regional Support Functions. These would provide support and pooled resources for certain practical aspects of State responses to mixed movements.

In particular, the Regional Support Functions could provide support for three broad areas of engagement and cooperation:

- (1) Regional efforts to differentiate those needing international protection from those who do not (Regional support for processing and case management).
- (2) Regional efforts to find solutions (both within and beyond the region) for those found to be in need international protection (Regional support for resettlement and burden sharing).
- (3) Regional efforts to return persons found not to be in need of international protection to their countries of origin (Regional support for return to countries of origin).

Further information on the proposed Regional Support Functions is provided in **Annex 2**.

ANNEX 1

Regional Cooperative Arrangements for Specific Groups of Refugees, Asylum-Seekers and Migrants in an Irregular Situation

Under the “umbrella” of the Regional Cooperation Framework (RCF), interested States, working together and with support from the Regional Support Functions (see Annex 2) as appropriate, could develop targeted, practical cooperative arrangements to better manage and find solutions for specific groups of refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants in an irregular situation.

Cooperative arrangements would be developed on the basis of mutual respect for the sovereignty of participating States. These arrangements would be designed to achieve both fair and effective outcomes for the individuals involved, as well as an equitable and principled distribution of responsibilities between participating States.

This document outlines two scenarios where practical regional cooperation could initially be considered:

Scenario A: Identifying solutions/outcomes for specific groups of a manageable size, for the majority of whom return or voluntary repatriation is viable

Scenario B: Identifying solutions/outcomes for people moving irregularly by sea

SCENARIO A:

Identifying solutions/outcomes for specific groups of a manageable size, for the majority of whom return or voluntary repatriation is viable

Cooperative arrangements could be developed to provide solutions/outcomes for specific, manageable groups of refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants in an irregular situation on the territory of several participating States. They could particularly address the situation of people who are from a country that is stabilizing following conflict or another humanitarian crisis, and where return or voluntary repatriation will accordingly be viable options for the majority. Cooperative arrangements, supported by the Regional Support Functions as appropriate, could ensure that responses to these groups are harmonized across the region, minimizing incentives for those without international protection needs to leave their countries of origin and/or for “forum shopping” between participating States. They could also ensure effective and humane return of persons not in need of international protection.

Assumptions and Pre-Conditions for Cooperation

- (i) *The number of people from one country of origin present on the territory of each participating State is sufficiently manageable to allow for individualised processing to be carried out (i.e. not a mass influx situation); and*
- (ii) *persons from that particular country of origin are present in more than one of the participating States; and*
- (iii) *the situation in the country of origin shows visible signs of improvement and stabilization; and*
- (iv) *the sustainable return of persons who are not in need of international protection to their country of origin is feasible; and*
- (v) *many refugees are expected to voluntarily return to their country of origin within a foreseeable period; and*
- (vi) *the number of people who will not be able to return home is likely to be small.*

Cooperative arrangements, supported by the Regional Support Functions as appropriate, might be considered in the following areas:

- 1 Developing a consistent, coherent and effective system of identification, registration and documentation, as well as standardized procedures for differentiation between groups according to varying needs (with support from the Regional Support Function for processing and case management as appropriate).

2 Subsequently:

- Developing sustainable return arrangements for persons found not to be in need international protection to their countries of origin (with support from the Regional Support Function for return to countries of origin as appropriate).
- Developing a common arrangement on organized interim stay for individuals who cannot return to their country of origin until a more durable solution can be achieved.
- Facilitating voluntary repatriation for refugees once conditions in the country of origin permit, in line with international standards and including support for reintegration into the country of origin.
- Burden sharing with the support of resettlement countries for people who cannot return home (with support from the Regional Support Function for resettlement and burden sharing as appropriate).

SCENARIO B:

Identifying solutions/outcomes for people moving irregularly by sea

The irregular movement of refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants by sea creates particular challenges for States and raises humanitarian concerns for the individuals involved. Cooperative arrangements between affected States and other interested stakeholders, including UNHCR and IOM, supported by the Regional Support Functions as appropriate, could assist to develop coherent and predictable responses tailored to the special circumstances of these movements.

Four possible situations falling under the broad category of “people moving irregularly by sea” can be anticipated, each requiring different responses by participating States and engaged stakeholders:

- Distress at sea and rescue at sea operations;
- Maritime interception operations;
- Discovery of stowaways on commercial vessels; and
- Irregular sea arrivals at the territory of participating States.

Assumptions, Challenges and Pre-Conditions for Cooperation:

- (i) *Each of the four situations (rescue at sea, interception, stowaways, and irregular sea arrivals) is different and requires a tailored response;*
- (ii) *people who travel irregularly by sea may have humanitarian needs arising from the risk and danger to human life and security involved;*
- (iii) *State responsibility for disembarkation and processing may need clarification;*
- (iv) *disembarkation of persons in places of safety raises complex operational and logistical questions which may need clarification;*
- (v) *the profiles and needs of people moving irregularly by sea may vary substantially and require differentiated responses.*

Cooperative arrangements, supported by the Regional Support Functions as appropriate, might be considered in the following areas:

- 1 Combating human smuggling and trafficking by sea.
- 2 Preserving the integrity and effectiveness of maritime search and rescue (SAR) services.
- 3 Ensuring that interception operations, where carried out, respect the principle of *non-refoulement* and are protection-sensitive.

- 4 Developing effective disembarkation agreements/procedures following rescue at sea and/or for interception operations where there is ambiguity about which State has responsibility.
- 5 Developing a consistent, coherent and effective system of identification, registration and documentation, as well as standardized procedures for differentiation between irregular maritime arrivals according to varying needs (with support from the Regional Support Function for processing and case management as appropriate).
- 6 Subsequently:
 - Developing sustainable return arrangements for irregular maritime arrivals found not to be in need international protection to their countries of origin (with support from the Regional Support Function for return to countries of origin as appropriate).
 - Ensuring timely and effective solutions are provided to irregular maritime arrivals who cannot return home (with support from the Regional Support Function for resettlement and burden sharing as appropriate).
 - Developing common understandings and practical cooperative arrangements for addressing secondary movements in a context of more equitable burden sharing.

ANNEX 2

Regional Support Functions

To support the effective implementation of the Regional Cooperation Framework (RCF), and to assist participating States to develop consistent and coherent responses to refugees, asylum-seekers and irregular movements, UNHCR proposes the establishment of three Regional Support Functions:

1. Regional support for processing and case management. This Support Function would provide support to participating States for the development of in-country processing and case management with a view to greater harmonization by eliminating disparities. Support would also be provided to States with existing national processing and case management procedures. Activities would include information sharing, training and capacity building, developing harmonized processes and procedures, and pooling resources (e.g. interpreters, country of origin information).
2. Regional support for resettlement and burden sharing. This Support Function would provide a channel for discussion and consensus building between participating States on resettlement and burden sharing. It is envisaged that this function would provide information, advice and necessary technical support to enable the effective processing and management of certain cases requiring resettlement under the RCF. It would also provide operational support for the resettlement of targeted, pre-defined groups of refugees, possibly through a processing centre for a limited number of refugees e.g. on an emergency basis for those who are unable to stay in the host country while their resettlement claim is processed.
3. Regional support for return to countries of origin. This Support Function would provide operational support to States for the return of rejected asylum-seekers and others who are not in need of international protection to their countries of origin.

The establishment of these Regional Support Functions would not preclude continued and enhanced bilateral or multilateral support from members of the international community to countries of origin or host countries.

Role of UNHCR

The Regional Support Functions would be developed by and for participating States in a spirit of collaborative partnership. UNHCR would be a key stakeholder and partner, continuing to provide its support and expertise as appropriate and consistent with its mandate and supervisory responsibility.

1. Regional support for processing and case management

This Support Function would assist with all relevant procedures from the arrival or apprehension of a person in irregular status on the territory of a participating State through to final determination of their status in the host country. This could include e.g. registration, identification and documentation, profiling and referral procedures, asylum procedures or other substantive procedures for persons with specific needs.

- Terms of Reference:**
- Provide support to develop the in-country processing and case management capacities of participating States, including, e.g., information sharing, workshops, training, joint exercises involving UNHCR and government officials from various participating States
 - Provide training, capacity-building and mentoring for existing national processing and case management systems in the areas of, e.g.:
 - Registration
 - Profiling and pre-screening
 - Interviewing techniques
 - Gathering and analysing country of origin information
 - Adjudication of asylum claims, including at the first instance and appeals levels
 - Other processes and procedures for identifying and assisting those with specific needs and risks, including women, children, trafficked persons
 - Provide a network for and coordinate pooled resources to be deployed to requesting countries, e.g.:
 - Interpreters
 - Country of origin information
 - Counselling and representational services, both legal and social
 - Jurisprudence of asylum States and regional bodies, as well as UNHCR guidelines
 - Propose harmonized standards for processing and case management that could be discussed, developed and agreed upon by participating States
 - In the event of emergencies, and upon request of the concerned States, coordinate the deployment of pooled resources to assist with significant and urgent demands on their processing and case management systems
 - Provide specific guidance and technical support on processing and case management following rescue at sea and maritime arrivals
- Location:**
- Could be a virtual entity, supported by a secretariat and/or
 - Staff located in one or more States who endorse the RCF
- Partners:**
- States within the region who endorse the RCF
 - UNHCR
 - Specialised NGOs and service providers
- Required Resources:**
- Qualified experts and adjudicators
 - Support staff
 - Funding from partner States; additional funds, personnel or in-kind contributions from other States as needed

2. Regional support for resettlement and burden sharing

This Support Function would be additional to existing resettlement processes currently being undertaken in the region. It would be targeted towards limited caseloads only: namely, small groups of refugees for whom coordinated assistance to process and allocate resettlement places would be of added value.

- Terms of Reference:**
- Provide a channel for discussion and consensus building among host countries and resettlement States on resettlement and burden sharing, including on resettlement possibilities for certain groups of refugees
 - Provide support for the processing of resettlement cases for certain groups of refugees in the region as appropriate, including:
 - Preparation and submission of resettlement referrals
 - Deploying resettlement expert teams to host countries to interview refugees who may be appropriate for resettlement
 - Completing medical clearance procedures
 - Coordinating transport logistics for departures
 - Propose harmonized standards for strategic resettlement as part of burden sharing between States. These could then be discussed, developed and agreed upon by partner States
 - Depending on needs and interest from States, the establishment of a physical processing centre(s) could be considered for **certain specific, small groups** of refugees pending resettlement. In this case (and in circumstances that would need further development):
 - Ensuring that timely resettlement places would be available for all refugees transferred to the centre would be essential
 - Transfer to the centre would only be considered for certain, defined groups of refugees, e.g., on an emergency basis for refugees who cannot stay in their current host country during processing of their resettlement claim
 - The centre would be open, and meet international standards with regards to, e.g., privacy, hygiene and security
 - Opportunities for self-reliance would be made available, depending on length of stay in the centre
- Location:**
- Could be a virtual entity, supported a secretariat and/or
 - Staff located in one or more States who endorse the RCF
 - If there is a physical structure(s), these would be located in one or more 1951 Convention States in the Asia-Pacific Region
- Partners:**
- States within the region who endorse the RCF
 - Resettlement countries within and outside the region
 - IOM
 - UNHCR
 - Specialised NGOs and service providers
- Required Resources:**
- Staff with resettlement expertise
 - Support staff
 - Funding from regional partner States and other interested States
 - Availability of resettlement places

3. Regional support for return to countries of origin

The principal goal of this Support Function would be to provide for a pooling of logistical resources to facilitate return of persons without international protection needs to their countries of origin by participating States. It could also improve the support provided to countries of origin receiving returning citizens, including enhancing reintegration and development assistance provided both to returnees and their local communities.

- Terms of Reference:**
- Liaise with countries of origin on issues such as amnesty for illegal departures, provision of documentation (e.g. travel), readmission agreements and reintegration packages
 - Prepare information on countries of origin to be used to counsel persons who wish to return, as well as for information campaigns in host countries and countries of origin
 - Organise cost-effective pooling of logistical resources for group returns to a given country of origin (flights, etc)
 - Advocate for international support to provide reintegration and development assistance to countries of origin
 - Encourage voluntary return, including through development of assisted voluntary return programmes
 - Propose harmonized standards for the return of persons not in need of international protection, in line with international law, that could be discussed, developed and agreed upon by partner States
- Location:**
- Could be a virtual entity, supported by a secretariat and/or
 - Staff located in one or more States who endorse the RCF
 - In the event of particularly large numbers of returns to one country of origin from several participating States, logistics and operations could be centralized at a temporary site specifically created for this (e.g. at an airport)
- Partners:**
- States within the region who endorse the RCF
 - UN country teams in countries of origin to encourage linkage with development assistance
 - IOM
 - UNHCR
 - Specialised local NGOs and service providers, such as for transport
- Required Resources:**
- Logistical experts
 - Senior officials to conduct diplomatic negotiations including in countries of origin
 - Funding from partner States and interested States from outside the region
 - Staff with expertise on development assistance