

Summary of key outcomes

30 March 2016 High Level Meeting on global responsibility sharing through pathways for admission of Syrian refugees

Highlights at a glance

“We are here to address the biggest refugee and displacement crisis of our time. This demands an exponential increase in global solidarity. Today we will discuss important numbers – but first and foremost, this meeting is about people.”

United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki Moon, opening statement

- **Pledges for pathways for admission for Syrians:** Some 15,000 new places were confirmed during and immediately after the conference. As of 12 April 2016, the overall total of places for is 201,049. In addition, up to 72,000 Syrians will be admitted to the European Union from Turkey.
- **Financial commitments:** A total of USD 10 million was pledged by the United States and AUD 8.5 million by Australia to support UNHCR’s resettlement activities and enhance resettlement processing capacity.
- **Gratitude** was expressed for the efforts of the States neighbouring Syria. Delegates from Lebanon, Turkey, Egypt, Jordan and Iraq conveyed appreciation for international solidarity, but highlighted the fact that resources are exhausted and there remains a critical need for humanitarian assistance and solutions.
- **Productive discussions** were held on good practices for the admission of Syrians, and it was recognized that key events to be held in 2016 – including the World Humanitarian Summit, the High Level plenary meeting at the General Assembly on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants, and the United States Presidential Summit – are of strategic importance and present unique opportunities to address the global refugee situation.
- **All parties acknowledged** that in light of the ongoing crisis, a greater commitment towards more equitable responsibility sharing from the international community is needed.
- **Attendance:** 131 Member States represented, with 24 countries represented at Ministerial level. Close to 600 individuals attended, with 462 individuals representing Member States, 33 from UN Systems, 55 from intergovernmental organizations and other entities and 45 from non-governmental institutions.
- **Media coverage:** 2,346 pieces of news coverage from 93 countries, with the top five coverage countries being USA, Germany, Sweden, Spain and Canada. 26 updates were shared on UNHCR’s global social media channels (Twitter/Facebook). Overall, on Twitter, 18,337 tweets mentioned the Pathways Meeting or UNHCR. Messaging focused on the following top six themes: 1. The need to resettle 10 per cent of Syrian refugees by 2018; 2. Various countries’ pledges to increase Syrian resettlement; 3. Reactions to the agreement between EU and Turkey; 4. The lack of progress being made at the conference; 5. How the refugee and displacement situation demands increased global solidarity; and 6. The importance of recognizing refugees as assets to host countries.

“I am under no illusion that our appeal comes at a very difficult time, and within a troubling context. But [...] the solidarity required is a global one. The collective effort of many States, and many actors within States, is essential.”

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi, closing remarks

Further details of pathways for admission pledges for Syrians:

Increases in global resettlement programmes: The United States (up to 100,000 FY 2017), Australia (up to 74,500 places over 4 years), Canada (up to 44,800 admissions in 2016) and Sweden (up to 5,000 a year by 2018) will significantly increase global resettlement programmes in coming years. Romania is considering up to 80 new resettlement places (number and nationality to be confirmed).

New resettlement programmes and additional resettlement places for Syrians: Argentina is considering the establishment of a resettlement programme and Chile will re-establish its resettlement programme for Syrian refugees. The United Kingdom has committed to resettle children at risk from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. France confirmed 1,980 places and Spain confirmed 725 resettlement places for Syrians.

Humanitarian Visas: France pledged 1,500 new humanitarian visas; Switzerland, Argentina and Brazil will continue to grant humanitarian visas to Syrians.

Family Reunification: A number of States affirmed their commitment to family reunification, including willingness to ease procedures. The USA has established a new programme that allows U.S. citizens to file refugee applications for their Syrian relatives in the region. Italy will introduce a special facilitated family reunification visa procedure and Bahrain is considering the establishment of a family reunification procedure for Syrians.

Study Opportunities: Many States confirmed scholarships and student visa regimes for Syrian refugees. France pledged 1,000 academic scholarships, while Costa Rica is considering funding scholarship programmes for Syrian and non-Syrian students. Canada pledged to work with the World University Service of Canada to explore opportunities to expand the Student Refugee Programme. Qatar will finance 100 Syrian students to study at the Sorbonne, and Italy and Russia also referred to increased study opportunities for Syrians (however, these pledges were not linked to admission). Germany pledged a total of 1,900 scholarships for Syrians through their DAFI and DAAD scholarship programmes, although these were also not linked to admission. Japan and Morocco are considering admitting Syrian refugees through scholarship programmes.

Private/Community Sponsorship: Canada pledged to offer an additional 10,000 private sponsorship places for Syrians. The UK announced plans to develop a community sponsorship scheme and Italy confirmed that 100 Syrians have arrived through its recently established “Humanitarian Corridor” programme, involving private and community resources in cooperation with religious communities. Iceland is exploring the possibility of establishing a private sponsorship programme for refugees.

Opportunities to further increase pathways for admission for Syrians:

Streamlined and Accessible Procedures: Accelerated admission processes for refugees through the removal or simplification of administrative barriers were mentioned by several States. Canada pledged to reduce administrative requirements in their Private Sponsorship of Refugee Program and will continue to consider Syrian refugees as prima facie refugees until 2017. The United States has taken steps to shorten the timeline for resettlement without compromising security procedures, and increased the number of interviewing officials at refugee processing centres in the region. Argentina pledged to put in place accelerated procedures for the processing of humanitarian visas, and Chile’s visa systems have been made more flexible for Syrian refugees.

Sharing of expertise: Canada, the United Kingdom, the United States and Sweden offered technical assistance on resettlement and integration to countries developing new programmes.

Commitment to Asylum: The importance of maintaining the right to asylum was emphasized, and many States reiterated their commitment to host and support refugees and provide them with the right to work as well as access to services.

Civil Society: The important role of Civil Society in admission programmes was highlighted. Italy pledged to consider new modalities of involving members of civil society in the resettlement programmes.

Private Sector: The value of involving the private sector in the development of solutions for refugees was stressed. In particular, Canada pledged to explore stronger partnerships with the private sector, with a view to improving the economic integration of refugees. Finland referred to innovative plans including public private partnerships to facilitate integration and fast track refugees into labour markets. Brazil also stated that they are considering ways of involving the private sector in their resettlement programme.

Looking towards the High Level plenary meeting of the General Assembly on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants (19 September 2016):

A number of delegations affirmed the need for greater responsibility sharing and the following were some of the key points made in statements:

- The current situation is an opportunity to change our global responses to refugee movements. Lack of safeguards and violation of fundamental rights lead to loss of life, and impinge on the protection climate and potential for solutions.
- The global response must be comprehensive, address prevention and root causes and create channels for safe migration, including for refugees via resettlement and humanitarian and other pathways. A comprehensive set of measures is needed to uphold the safety, rights and dignity of people on the move. Within this context, the distinction between migrants and refugees must be acknowledged and respected, notwithstanding the imperative of upholding the human rights of all.
- There is a need for international cooperation to address the challenges and harness the benefits of migration and the admission of refugees. The rise of discrimination and xenophobia, and the increase of tension between States are further contributors to risks posed to refugees and migrants, and there is a need to cast positive narratives of refugees and migrant to mitigate intolerance.
- The High Level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly should lead to better concrete proposals and commitments for more predictable and equitable responsibility sharing for refugees.