

**ANNUAL CONSULTATIONS WITH NGOs  
1 – 3 JULY 2015 - International Conference Center Geneva**

**REGIONAL SESSION ON EUROPE**

***BACKGROUND PAPER***

**Date:** Thursday, 2 July 2015

**Time/Room:** 14:30-16:15, Room 5

**Establishing Additional Legal Avenues for Persons in Need of International Protection**

An increasing number of refugees and migrants are undertaking risky sea journeys across the Mediterranean in search of international protection. In 2014, some 219,000 persons arrived to Europe through the Mediterranean, while approximately 112,750 persons have already arrived in 2015. Despite extensive search and rescue activities undertaken in 2014, over 3,500 persons died at sea last year. So far in 2015, some 1,850 refugees and migrants are estimated to have died or are missing.

UNHCR has been calling on European countries to consider providing increased opportunities for safe and regular legal avenues of migration and access to protection, which can offer viable alternatives for those considering undertaking such risky journeys. This could be achieved through, for example, enhanced and expanded resettlement opportunities, community-based private sponsorship schemes, a flexible approach to family reunification, humanitarian visas, as well as student scholarship and labour migration schemes. NGOs have a critical role to play in this respect.

This panel will bring together UNHCR, NGO and State representatives to examine those *ad hoc* legal avenues already developed by European States in response to the Syrian refugee situation. Canada's private sponsorship and student refugee programmes will also be presented to explore how these could potentially be adapted to the European context. Focus will be placed primarily on the need and potential for such initiatives to become a more permanent feature of the European protection landscape and the extent to which they could offer sustainable solutions over time, as well their potential to be replicated by other States. Areas of strengthened cooperation between NGOs and UNHCR will be discussed for both the development and, where appropriate, implementation of such programmes, including the opportunity to further develop UNHCR-NGO advocacy messages on other forms of admission that can more positively affect the response of States.

**Moderator: Mr. Leon Prop, Director, Red Cross EU Office, Brussels**

The moderator will introduce the topic of the session by highlighting the context of the challenges being faced in the Mediterranean, but also drawing this into the broader challenges of meeting global protection needs and the adoption of a more diversified approach. Through a set of targeted questions, the moderator will stimulate debate with the invited panelists and facilitate structured dialogue with the audience.

**Panelists:**

**Ms. Philippa Candler, Head of the Policy and Legal Support Unit, Bureau for Europe, UNHCR** will provide an overview of the development of UNHCR's advocacy on resettlement and other forms of admission, which initially advanced in response to the Syrian refugee situation. This was subsequently incorporated into UNHCR's Central Mediterranean Sea Initiative Action Plan, where it forms a central component towards a comprehensive European response in providing alternative legal avenues of entry to those undertaking risky sea journeys.

**Ms. Johanna Heil, Resettlement Coordinator, Caritas Friedland, Germany** will speak to their experience of implementing the German Humanitarian Admission Programme (HAP), which has played such a key role in the global response to Syrian protection needs, providing 20,000 HAP places to date. Designed to deliver a more timely response to an emergency situation, Caritas Friedland will present the primary successes and challenges of the programme, and will also discuss the individual sponsorship programme implemented by the Federal States, reflecting on how they have worked in practice.

**Mr. Bruce Scoffield, Minister Counsellor (Humanitarian Affairs), Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations in Geneva** will provide an overview of Canada's long-established private sponsorship programme, as well as the World University Service of Canada's (WUSC) student refugee programme. Central to the success of the private sponsorship programme is the direct involvement of civil society. The primary features of both programmes will be provided, outlining the types of collaboration and cooperation required to make such programmes a success.

**Rapporteur: Mr. Peter O'Sullivan, Resettlement Officer, Bureau for Europe, UNHCR**

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**Time/Room:** 16:45-18:30, Room 5

**The Ukraine Situation**

More than a year into the conflict over 1.3 million people are registered as internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Ukraine, and the humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate. Despite a ceasefire agreed in February this year, an increase in hostilities has resulted in even greater hardship for people still living in conflict-affected areas. The humanitarian and protection needs of people in displacement are exacerbated by a worsening economic climate, and the restrictions on movement for people and access for humanitarian workers compound this difficult situation.

The challenges in meeting basic needs and access to essential services, such as food, shelter, medicine, healthcare services and education is becoming more urgent as the conflict is prolonged. Moreover, freedom of movement, IDP registration, civil documentation, and the non-payment of pensions, for example, continue to pose serious protection concerns. Throughout, most struggle to find employment and accommodation. Some move onwards to other parts of the country while others go back to areas close to the conflict. There is also a need to focus on longer-term solutions, assuming that this full scale voluntary return will not be quick in coming.

Ukrainian civil society and local NGOs have played a critical role in the humanitarian response in Ukraine. These organisations, some pre-existing, others created in direct response to the dire needs they were faced with, provided services for affected persons in a much more organized fashion than many other IDP contexts. From hearing their experiences – their successes, their challenges - we can draw important lessons for future operations.

Increasing numbers of Ukrainians have also left the country. While countries neighbouring Ukraine have shown solidarity in welcoming more than 878,000 Ukrainians, stay arrangements are usually of temporary nature and do not

necessarily provide long-term stability. In 2014, 13,630 Ukrainians applied for asylum the EU.

This panel brings together representatives of UNHCR and NGOs working provide protection and to assist IDPs in Ukraine as well as Ukrainians in other countries. They will share their experience and explore areas for enhanced complementarities and coordination among all stakeholders, with a view to enhancing the capacity of systems, including local community-based frameworks, and efforts already in place to address the needs of those impacted by the conflict, and to strengthen related advocacy. The discussion will include the need to strengthen protection monitoring capacity in the east of Ukraine as well as to ensure protection for Ukrainians, including through legal aid and judicial engagement, in neighbouring countries.

**Moderator:**

**Ms. Diane Goodman, Deputy Director, Bureau for Europe, UNHCR**

The moderator will introduce the session by highlighting the most persistent protection challenges in the context of Ukraine. The moderator hopes to then stimulate a lively debate.

**Panelists:**

**Mr. Alexander Galkin, Director, R2P, Ukraine**

Representing a Ukrainian NGO, Mr. Galkin will speak to his experience at the heart of the protection response. First to respond when the conflict broke out, local civil society actors in Ukraine can share unique insights on the current and evolving situation.

**Ms. Marina Leksina, Project Coordinator, Memorial/Civic Assistance, Russia**

Russia, having received nearly 700,000 applications for asylum or other forms of legal stay, has accommodated the biggest recorded influx of Ukrainians in the wake of the conflict. Ms. Leksina will provide her analysis of the external aspect of displacement in the Ukraine context; representing an organization at the fore of the protection response for Ukrainians in the Russian Federation.

**Mr. Bruno Jochum, Director General, Doctors Without Borders, Switzerland**

MSF has had a long presence in Ukraine that pre-dates the current context. As one of the few organisations to operate on both sides of the line, with a strong presence in the non-Government controlled areas, MSF's panelist Mr. Jochum is in a unique position to describe to us the challenges faced in providing humanitarian, life-saving assistance in Ukraine, on both sides of the line between Government-controlled and non-Government controlled areas.

**Rapporteur: Ms. Romy Green, Protection Officer, Bureau for Europe, UNHCR**