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**Follow-up to the New York Declaration and the
comprehensive refugee response framework**

Summary

On 19 September 2016, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants and requested UNHCR to initiate and develop the comprehensive refugee response framework, contained in the annex to the Declaration. With clear objectives to strengthen the response to large movements of refugees and ensure more equitable responsibility-sharing with the countries hosting them, the application of the comprehensive refugee response framework will also inform the development of a global compact on refugees in 2018.

This paper reviews the Office's work to support States in the implementation of the comprehensive refugee response framework. It also describes the next steps toward the adoption of a global compact on refugees.

Contents

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
I. Introduction	1-4	3
II. The comprehensive refugee response framework	5-7	3
III. Applying the comprehensive refugee response framework.....	8-25	4
IV. New ways of working, new partnerships	26-30	8
V. Towards a global compact on refugees	31-32	8

I. Introduction

1. On 19 September 2016, the United Nations General Assembly convened a summit of Heads of State and Government with the imperative of considering how the international community should best respond to the growing phenomenon of large movements of refugees and migrants. The summit occurred against a backdrop of historic global forced displacement – including over 21 million refugees and 3 million asylum-seekers. The resultant New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (A/RES/71/1), adopted unanimously, contains several sets of commitments to enhance protection for refugees and migrants.¹

2. The New York Declaration is a milestone for global solidarity and refugee protection. It reaffirms the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees as the foundation of the international refugee regime and recognizes that protecting those who are forced to flee – and supporting the countries that receive them – are shared international responsibilities that must be borne more equitably and in a more predictable manner.

3. To enable a more comprehensive and predictable response “based on the principles of international cooperation and burden-and responsibility-sharing,” the General Assembly provided a comprehensive refugee response framework (CRRF) in annex I to the Declaration, and requested that UNHCR develop and initiate the framework in close coordination with States and through a multi-stakeholder approach. The Declaration commits States to work towards the adoption in 2018 of a global compact on refugees, based on the CRRF and informed by its application in a range of specific situations. The High Commissioner is requested to include a proposed global compact in his annual report to the General Assembly in 2018.

4. This paper addresses those parts of the New York Declaration that pertain to refugees. It reviews UNHCR’s efforts, in cooperation with States and a wide range of stakeholders, to initiate the application of the CRRF in the 9 months since the Declaration’s adoption. It also summarizes the next steps that UNHCR will follow to support the development of a global compact on refugees.

II. The comprehensive refugee response framework

5. The General Assembly described the CRRF as “a framework for a comprehensive and people-oriented refugee response, which is in accordance with international law and best practice.” This people-centred approach addresses refugees not simply as individuals in need of protection and assistance, but also as actors who can be self-reliant and contribute to the communities where they find refuge, when permitted and enabled to do so. Thus, the framework strongly supports the socio-economic inclusion of refugees through expanded access to education, livelihoods and labour markets, as well as to local and national services.

6. The framework considers refugees in their broader context. It reflects an understanding that large movements of refugees not only have humanitarian ramifications, but also economic, political, social and developmental ones. Member States also recognized that host communities are the first to support refugees. They, therefore, committed to

¹ The Leaders’ Summit for Refugees, held one day following the adoption of the New York Declaration, translated some of those commitments into action. Forty-seven countries made commitments towards increased responsibility-sharing in the following three areas: increased multilateral humanitarian assistance; increased third-country admissions for refugees through resettlement and complementary pathways; and legal and policy changes to expand access to work and education. The commitments of six of the nine countries where the comprehensive refugee response framework is being applied constitute key elements of their national implementation plans.

supporting development programmes that benefit both refugees and host communities, as well as to providing environmental, social and infrastructural support.

7. In its practical application, the framework has four express objectives: to ease pressure on host countries; enhance refugee self-reliance; expand access to third-country solutions; and support conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity. It is structured in four parts, with specific elements and actions to be taken in the areas of reception and admission, immediate and ongoing needs, support for host countries and communities, and durable solutions. These elements draw upon the evolution of good practices from over 65 years of experience in international refugee protection, humanitarian assistance and solutions. Yet they also represent a fundamental shift in the way that UNHCR and the international community respond to large movements of refugees. In particular, the CRRF:

Calls on States, as international actors, to engage in refugee responses not simply as humanitarian donors or “host countries. Expressing a commitment to a more equitable sharing of responsibilities, the New York Declaration emphasizes that this should “take into account the existing contributions and differing capacities and resources among States.” In addition to roles as donor and host countries, States are, for example, development partners – with multilateral and bilateral support – as well as investors and trade partners. States engage in political processes, prevention and peacebuilding. They can also tangibly support responsibility-sharing by welcoming refugees through third-country resettlement and complementary pathways to admission.

Is anchored in a multi-stakeholder, whole-of-society approach. A comprehensive response foresees the need to further engage national and local authorities, as well international financial institutions, regional organizations, civil society (including non-governmental and faith-based organizations), the private sector, academia, the media, and refugees and host communities themselves. Each of these actors is recognized as having key roles and capacities to contribute to a comprehensive response.

Requires the predictable, systematic and sustained engagement of development actors. Early engagement and the coordination of national and local humanitarian and development strategies, can strengthen service provision in refugee host areas, promote the resilience of host communities and the self-reliance of refugees, and reduce aid dependency. This enables an early and more sustainable response, while also driving efforts toward solutions from the outset, including in countries of origin, third countries and countries of asylum.

Embraces investment and innovation through private sector engagement, diverse forms of investment and innovative humanitarian delivery, benefiting refugees and host communities alike.

III. Applying the CRRF

8. The CRRF is universal, containing elements applicable to all large movements of refugees, while being adaptable to each context. It will, in time, be applied to all situations involving large movements of refugees, in accordance with the needs of the refugees and the countries and communities hosting them. For its initial two years, the General Assembly requested that UNHCR engage with States and consult all relevant stakeholders to evaluate its practical application in a range of situations.

9. Nine States have begun applying the CRRF: Costa Rica, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Somalia, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania. Building on their national responses, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Uganda and Somalia are further developing a regional cooperation framework for the Somali refugee situation, supported by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). Similarly Costa Rica, Guatemala,

Honduras and Mexico are building on existing regional and subregional cooperation, rooted in the San José Action Statement and the Brazil Declaration and Plan of Action, to address movements of refugees, migrants, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and returnees, affecting Central America and Mexico.

The Somali refugee situation

10. An estimated 1.8 million people are displaced within Somalia, and 880,000 Somali refugees – many third-generation – have found refuge across the subregion for decades. In March 2017, IGAD Member States convened a summit of Heads of State and Government, hosted by Kenya, and affirmed the need for a comprehensive regional approach and strong cooperation between Somalia and countries of the region on a range of political, security, humanitarian, peacebuilding, development, economic and trade issues in order to find lasting solutions to forced displacement. The Nairobi Declaration on Durable Solutions for Somali Refugees and the Reintegration of Refugees in Somalia provides these States and the international community with an unprecedented opportunity to address the situation in host countries and Somalia, simultaneously and holistically.

11. IGAD States made commitments toward four objectives: accelerating progress within Somalia toward conditions conducive to voluntary and sustainable return; maintaining protection and asylum space in countries of asylum, while enhancing refugees' self-reliance and inclusion, and supporting host communities; strengthening subregional cooperation; and easing pressure on host countries through international responsibility-sharing. Host countries undertook to ensure continued protection of refugees in their countries, while pursuing progressive policies to enhance access to education, employment and freedom of movement. The achievement of these objectives will require substantial support from the international community, including humanitarian assistance, development support, access to financial markets, political and peacebuilding support, and the engagement of the private sector and diaspora communities.

12. Last month, the London roundtable on supporting refugees and their host communities in the Horn and East Africa recognized the Nairobi Declaration as constituting the regional application of the CRRF for the Somali refugee situation. IGAD is now developing a regional roadmap for implementation of the Nairobi Declaration, with the support of the European Union and UNHCR, and in consultation with partners, including national experts from refugee agencies and line ministries. A mapping of humanitarian and development initiatives at national and local levels, along with an assessment of gaps and challenges, will support the development of national action plans that reflect the elements of the CRRF, incorporate host countries' commitments from the Leaders' Summit, where applicable, and that are aligned with national and local development plans and priorities. It is envisioned that an IGAD regional framework will be developed and endorsed by an inter-ministerial committee by year-end. The High Commissioner's Special Envoy for the Somali Refugee Situation will continue playing a critical role in support of these efforts.

Somalia

13. Even as the drought presents new humanitarian challenges inside Somalia, the strong leadership and accountability of the newly-elected President and Parliament have created an opening for peace, stabilization and development. Strengthening security and basic services for the population could eventually enable the voluntary and sustainable return of Somali refugees. The resolution of Somalia's debt arrears will be instrumental to the government's capacity to strengthen infrastructure and service delivery for its population.

14. The CRRF will be anchored within existing mechanisms, primarily the National Development Plan and the government-led Durable Solutions Initiative. The President will convene a national dialogue on displacement and solutions within the coming months, and

the Ministries of Interior and Planning have begun elaborating a comprehensive national plan on displacement, consistent with the CRRF.

Djibouti

15. With a population of approximately 1 million, Djibouti hosts more than 26,000 refugees. Promptly fulfilling its Leaders' Summit commitment, in January 2017 Djibouti promulgated a progressive refugee law, which will transform the situation of refugees from one of encampment to one of social and economic inclusion, through increased access to education, social services, livelihoods and legal employment, and freedom of movement. The government has convened workshops with stakeholders and begun elaborating a roadmap for the CRRF and implementation of the new law through decrees. In addition to enabling access to the national medical insurance scheme, a strong focus of the government is ensuring foreign certification equivalency, certification of education for refugee children and their progressive inclusion in the national education system.

Ethiopia

16. With 830,000 refugees from 19 countries – and nearly 40,000 new arrivals in the first quarter of this year alone – Ethiopia hosts the second largest refugee population in Africa. As a co-host of the Leaders' Summit, the country made nine far-reaching pledges to enhance refugee inclusion and self-reliance, ranging from expanding its out-of-camp policy to providing work permits, increasing educational enrolment, locally integrating some long-staying refugees and expanding livelihoods through the provision of irrigable land and the creation of industrial parks that will benefit both refugees and host communities alike. The implementation of the pledges, along with a strengthening of the country's legal and policy framework, constitute the core of the CRRF in Ethiopia.

17. Under the Ethiopian Government's leadership, a roadmap for implementation of the pledges has been prepared, in consultation with a range of internal and external stakeholders. The roadmap outlines key opportunities and the partnerships required to achieve them. The government is also revising its Refugee Proclamation to transpose the pledges into the legal framework. Within the government, leadership for the CRRF is being finalized with broad-based participation, including the Ministry of Finance and Economic Cooperation, the Ethiopia Investment Commission, the Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA), as well as line ministries. It is being closely coordinated in partnership with UNHCR, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the World Bank.

Uganda

18. As the largest host country in Africa, providing protection to over 1 million refugees, Uganda was the first State to announce its application of the CRRF. While responding to the continuing emergency in the north, where an average of 2,000 refugees are arriving daily, the government maintains its inclusive and progressive policy. Refugees in Uganda have access to national services, including health and education, enjoy the right to work and establish businesses, and have freedom of movement. In line with its settlement approach, the government, along with the host communities, has provided refugees with plots of land on which they can build homes and farm. In recent months, Uganda has hosted government representatives from across the region who have come to see these policies in practice.

19. The Office of the Prime Minister and UNHCR launched the CRRF in March 2017 with the objectives of: (1) supporting the government's progressive policy towards refugees and maintaining asylum space; (2) enhancing the resilience and self-reliance of refugees and host communities; (3) expanding solutions, including third-country options; and (4) supporting Uganda's role in the region and investing in human capital and transferrable skills. A multi-stakeholder CRRF steering group and secretariat, led by the Government, provide a forum to bring together humanitarian and development actors, local government

officials and the private sector. The steering group serves as a platform for strategic planning, building on other initiatives such as the Second National Development Plan, the Settlement Transformation Agenda and the Refugee and Host Population Empowerment Strategic Framework. In June, the President of Uganda and the United Nations Secretary-General will host a Solidarity Summit on Refugees, providing an important opportunity for States and other partners to manifest their support.

United Republic of Tanzania

20. With a strong tradition of solidarity, as demonstrated by its decision to naturalize over 160,000 Burundian refugees whose arrival dates to 1972, the United Republic of Tanzania hosts over 312,000 refugees and asylum-seekers, including more than 250,000 Burundians who arrived since 2015.

21. The Tanzanian Deputy Minister of Home Affairs launched the CRRF's application this month, with the participation of regional commissioners, line ministries, members of parliament, NGOs and the United Nations community. The government's commitments at the Leaders' Summit provide a strong foundation for the CRRF's application and a more systematic and sustainable response in areas where refugees are hosted. Six priority areas of engagement have been identified, which include: reviewing the Refugees Act of 1998 and the national refugee policy of 2003, enhancing refugees' access to education and labour markets, and facilitating solutions for the remaining Burundian refugees who arrived in 1972.

22. The CRRF's implementation is being co-led by the Ministry of Home Affairs and the President's Office/Regional Administration and Local Government, with support from UNHCR and humanitarian and development partners. It will build on existing mechanisms, including the United Nations Joint Programme for the Kigoma Region, which fosters an inclusive approach to supporting refugees and host communities.

The Americas

23. Socio-economic turmoil and high levels of violence have resulted in large movements of IDPs, refugees and migrants across the north of Central America, and recent years have seen a significant increase in those seeking international protection in neighbouring countries. States in the region had already recognized the need for a comprehensive regional approach to the complex situation of forced displacement in the region – an approach that brings a mixture of humanitarian and security measures, socio-economic interventions and macro-economic support. Through the 2014 Brazil Plan of Action and the 2016 San José Action Statement, States and other partners in the region expressed their collective commitments to address the root causes of displacement and to strengthen protection and solutions for those affected.

24. Building on these regional frameworks, Costa Rica, Guatemala and Mexico have recently joined Honduras in its decision to apply the CRRF and have collectively agreed to develop a regional CRRF. This framework, known as the comprehensive regional protection and solutions framework (CRPSF), will facilitate enhanced collaboration among countries of origin, transit, destination and return – as well as civil society, development actors, international financial institutions, the private sector and affected communities. It will seek to address the root causes of displacement, respond to its humanitarian and development consequences, strengthen asylum systems and facilitate durable solutions, including complementary pathways. The CRPSF and its preparatory process will be State-led, with support from UNHCR, as well as from the Organization of American States and the Central American Integration System.

25. A high-level roundtable will be convened in Honduras in October 2017 to agree to the main elements of the regional framework. In preparation, broad-based national consultations have recently begun in Costa Rica, Guatemala and Honduras to review progress to date and

to identify gaps and develop national priorities for the CRPSF. The consultations will provide the basis for each State to develop a national action plan. These plans will identify the steps needed to implement the commitments made and to address new challenges, and will further outline corresponding financial and human resource requirements. Regional consultations will engage an array of stakeholders, including the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, the Regional Conference on Migration, the United Nations Development Group for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Council of Central American Ombudspersons, faith-based organizations, and international and regional financial institutions.

IV. New ways of working, new partnerships

26. The CRRF invites – and requires – new ways of working for all partners engaged in responding to large movements of refugees. At the global, national and local levels, UNHCR and the States applying the CRRF are seeking to develop new partnerships and to enhance existing ones.

27. UNHCR's efforts to strengthen humanitarian-development cooperation are outlined in EC/68/SC/CRP.17², including collaboration with the World Bank, the International Labour Organization, and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. The World Bank's engagement has significantly enhanced understanding of the development impacts of displacement and helped identify where development interventions can support prevention, provide medium-term support and rebuild communities. The International Development Association's (IDA) \$ 2 billion sub-window for refugees and host communities may play a transformative role for some host countries and communities. Joint UNHCR-World Bank missions have already taken place to three IDA-eligible CRRF countries.

28. To better capitalize on the expertise and capacities of NGOs and civil society representatives, UNHCR and partners have established a joint UNHCR/NGO/International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) Reference Group on the CRRF. Meeting regularly, this group facilitates exchange with partners at the global and local levels and will contribute to the strengthening of operational responses and the gathering of lessons learned. More than 300 local, national and international NGOs participated in this year's Annual Consultations with NGOs, which focused on the CRRF.

29. In recent years, private sector action for refugees has evolved beyond financial support and corporate social responsibility initiatives to creating economic opportunities for refugees and host communities and applying technical expertise and innovation to address operational challenges. The CRRF reflects this, and the private sector will be a critical partner in its application. In this regard, UNHCR has signed a letter of intent with the International Chamber of Commerce and is exploring avenues for collaboration at global and national levels.

30. UNHCR's work in these areas is facilitated by a small CRRF task team. Reflecting the intent of the New York Declaration, the team includes colleagues seconded by the World Bank, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme and a member recruited from the NGO community.

² Available from <http://www.unhcr.org/standing-committee-meetings.html>.

V. Towards a global compact on refugees

31. In addition to initiating and developing the CRRF in a range of situations, the New York Declaration tasks the High Commissioner with proposing a global compact on refugees, based on the CRRF, to the General Assembly in 2018. UNHCR envisages that the global compact on refugees will comprise two parts: the comprehensive refugee response framework, as contained in the New York Declaration, supplemented by preambular and concluding paragraphs; and a complementary programme of action, which will set out actions that can be taken – by Member States and by other relevant stakeholders – to underpin the CRRF, to facilitate its full implementation, and to share more equitably the responsibility for comprehensive refugee responses. A “roadmap”³ for this process has been prepared by UNHCR and shared in the context of regular briefings that are convened with all United Nations Member States, as well as intergovernmental organizations and NGOs in Geneva.

32. Along with the application of the CRRF and the gathering of lessons learned, a key element of this process this year will be a series of thematic discussions with all Member States and relevant stakeholders. Informal and interactive in nature, these thematic discussions will aim to identify concrete actions and good practices that can be taken – both by Member States and by other relevant stakeholders – to implement and contribute to a comprehensive refugee response. The first session, exploring current and past responsibility-sharing arrangements, will be held on 10 July, while the remaining sessions will be held in October and November.

³ Available from <http://www.unhcr.org/towards-a-global-compact-on-refugees.html>.