

Oral update on ExCom Conclusion

StandCom, 29 June 2016

Excellencies, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am grateful to have the opportunity to once again orally brief the Standing Committee on the process relating to the ExCom conclusion on machine-readable travel documents.

We have started the formal process with an informational briefing on 29 May. The objective was to get a deeper understanding of the issue at hand and to ensure a good level of knowledge among delegations before starting the negotiations. Representatives of UNHCR, States and civil society were invited to make presentations in that regard.

As such, allow me here to sincerely thank the Philippines and Ecuador for having shared their national experiences in that framework. It was very helpful to hear about States' practices in relation to machine readable travel documents.

Since then, we held 4 negotiation sessions on 30 May, 8, 12 and 16 June on the basis of the zero draft circulated in mid-May. Negotiations have been intense and progress has been made on a number of points, including key paragraphs of the conclusion.

This being said, significant work remains to be undertaken if we want to reach agreement on the whole text. As things stand, the issues on which there remains divergent views have been clearly identified. I am therefore currently conducting bilateral consultations in order to find ways to get positions closer to one another on those points.

Colleagues,

Allow me here to remind you that MRTDs are a technical issue. As such, the scope of the conclusion should remain within that realm.

This being said, the technical nature of the conclusion should not hide the crucial importance of travel documents. A travel document is a matter of priority for the refugee who needs to be evacuated to another country that has accepted to provide him with medical treatment. It is also a priority for the siblings that have been granted with refugee status in different countries but who cannot meet due to the lack of travel documents. And the list can go on and on.

I would therefore call on delegations to take these personal realities into account in the negotiations. I am convinced that we can find solution to the outstanding issues if all parties are ready to engage in a genuine spirit of compromise.

Failing to reach consensus on the ExCom conclusion is certainly a signal we need to avoid in the context of the process leading up to the Global Compact on refugees.

I thank you for your attention.