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

**Working Group on Resettlement
Geneva, 11-12 October 2011**

**Discussion Paper
Implementation of the Strategic Use of Resettlement**

I. The strategic use of resettlement and priority situations

1. Resettlement is first and foremost a protection tool and a durable solution for refugees. Resettlement also serves as a form of burden-sharing with countries hosting refugees. Past experience has shown that resettlement could operate as an instrument to leverage temporary asylum for refugees who are to be resettled, as well as constitute part of comprehensive frameworks for protection and solutions for specific refugee situations. Given that the number of resettlement places fall far short of global resettlement needs, there is increasing realization on the part of the resettlement community that concerted efforts should be made to actively apply resettlement in ways which could bring wider benefits to the larger refugee populations who remain in need of protection and durable solutions.
2. In this context, the concept of strategic use of resettlement recognizes the potential of resettlement to bring about wider protection and solutions benefits and keeps a focus on how such additional benefits may be realized; the concept also views the strategic use of resettlement as a means to garner the wider engagement of resettlement countries in a spirit of international solidarity and equitable burden sharing, as well as a means of engaging the authorities of the country hosting refugees.
3. By designating certain refugee situations as a “priority situation” for a “strategic use of resettlement”, the resettlement community signals its intention to step up resettlement activities and use its enhanced engagement to maximize protection and solutions benefits for the refugee population in the specific country concerned. In this regard, a “priority situation” for a “strategic use of resettlement” serves as a process whereby the resettlement community harnesses its limited resources to move decidedly forward in supporting selected refugee situations.
4. At the 2009 October Working Group on Resettlement (WGR) UNHCR tabled a discussion paper¹ to clarify the conceptual elements of a “strategic use of resettlement”. The paper provides underlying considerations of the concept and describes potential protection benefits that could be derived from its use in different operational contexts. As a way to make more effective strategic use of resettlement, UNHCR had proposed that further discussion be focused on selected refugee situations where there are identified resettlement needs and potential protection outcomes.
5. It was in this context that the Swedish Chair of the WGR in 2009/2010, together with UNHCR, initiated discussions on intensifying the strategic use of resettlement in seven [priority] refugee situations in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East/North

¹UNHCR, Discussion Paper “The Strategic Use of Resettlement”, October 2009



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Africa region. These discussions were aimed at specifying strategic protection dividends and developing concrete action. UNHCR's position paper on the strategic use of resettlement,² issued in July 2010, incorporates the outcomes of these discussions.

II. Considerations for designating a situation as a priority situation for a strategic use of resettlement

6. Designating a specific refugee situation for using resettlement strategically does not detract from the overall use of resettlement as a protection and durable solutions tool in many of UNHCR's ongoing operations worldwide. Rather, such designation may lead to increase support of the resettlement community in addressing specific protection and solutions needs of the selected. In the context of the ATR/WGR process, designating a situation for a strategic use of resettlement entails keeping the specific situations under regular discussion and review to assess progress made in achieving wider strategic benefits and in garnering more resettlement places.
7. The initial seven priority situations proposed by UNHCR for consideration by resettlement States were: (1) Somali refugees in Dadaab, Kenya; (2) Afghan refugees in Iran; (3) Refugees of various nationalities in Turkey; (4) Afghan refugees in Uzbekistan; (5) Eritrean refugees in Libya; (6) Iraqi and Palestinian refugees in Syria, Jordan and Lebanon; and (7) Refugees of various nationalities in Pacific Island States.³ At the ATR 2011, two situations were de-listed, namely, Afghan refugees in Uzbekistan, and refugees of various nationalities in Pacific Island States, and two others were included, Afghan refugees in Pakistan, and Colombian refugees in the Latin American region.
8. In proposing a situation for the strategic use of resettlement, UNHCR considers a number of elements:

Strategic outcomes:

- As a result of demonstrated burden sharing efforts by resettlement countries, there is good potential for increased engagement on the part of the authorities of the host country to use resettlement to leverage wider protection and solutions dividends benefiting the refugee population as a whole; and/or
- There are good prospects for enhancing comprehensive approaches to protection and solutions for the concerned refugee population; and/or
- There are good prospects for enhancing the quality of asylum or the overall refugee protection environment in the host country concerned.

Resettlement aspects:

- There are distinct resettlement needs of various dimensions which are not being met, and resettlement would serve as an important protection and durable solution tool, and as appropriate, a form of burden-sharing.

²UNHCR, UNHCR Position Paper on the Strategic Use of Resettlement, July 2010

³For detailed information, please refer to the preparatory material "Fact sheets on seven priority resettlement initiatives" tabled at extra-ordinary session of the WGR, 13 December 2009.



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- Enhancing resettlement activities would not be overly hampered by accessibility challenges, and UNHCR is able to employ sufficient resources to conduct resettlement and other protection and solutions activities.
- There are good prospects for concerted efforts / engagements by multiple resettlement States.
- Some situations can be best addressed through multi-year resettlement planning and engagement, while in other situations; short-term resettlement intervention may be effective.

Protection dividends:

- There are protection dividends, varying in scope and nature, that could be realistically derived from resettlement engagement, such as improved access to asylum, adherence to the principle of *non-refoulement* and UNHCR's improved access to refugee populations including those in detention.

Risk analysis:

- The strategic use of resettlement will not jeopardize or hamper other durable solutions opportunities in the operation.
 - Selecting the specific operation would not create an imbalance of priorities geographically.
9. Within UNHCR, the Resettlement Service consults closely with the Bureau concerned, and the above elements are weighed and balanced taking into account the overall operational context of the specific refugee situation prior to taking up the discussions at the ATCR/WGR.
 10. Expected protection and solutions benefits and outcomes need to be carefully defined so as to ensure that these are realistic, measurable and bring added strategic value to the operation as a whole. UNHCR believes that enhancement or continuation of a resettlement programme should not be conditioned on guaranteed success in outcomes, rather should create an environment by which such outcomes can be achieved overtime. A process of review and evaluation would be called for to measure achievements and progress. It should be noted that there are situations where resettlement of a small number of refugees may have an effective leverage to attain protection dividends.
 11. While the strategic use of resettlement as a durable solution is often associated with addressing protracted refugee situations, it does not exclude the possibility, as a protection tool, and durable solutions mechanism, to address emergency refugee situations.

III. Assessment of progress against objectives in priority situations

12. The definition of measurable benchmarks and time frames to evaluate protection benefits deriving from the strategic use of resettlement may be challenging, but is a prerequisite for mobilizing efforts to achieving concrete results. To a large extent, gaining wider protection and solutions benefits is often subject to external environmental factors which may risk resulting in stalled progress. As appropriate,



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concrete benefits are to be defined in a manner to progressively achieve larger strategic impacts overtime.

13. Throughout the process, whether through WGR/ATCR fora or “core group” meetings, it is important for stakeholders engaged in the priority situations to jointly evaluate the progress made, measured against resettlement objectives and protection benefits, to reflect on opportunities and challenges, and to strategize a way forward to advance the situations. The “Fact Sheet” on the priority situations periodically updated by UNHCR and shared at WGR/ATCR fora provides a summary of such periodic assessments.
14. In assessing progress made towards achievements of expected protection dividends, the following aspects should be taken into consideration:
 - a) There is no fixed criteria for setting timelines; timelines would depend on the operational context and the expected protection and solutions benefits; while some protection and solutions dividends may be expected in the short-term, others may only be expected to take place over a longer period, yet others may benefit from no set timelines; timelines could be adjusted based on progress achieved.
 - b) Protection and solutions benefits could be derived directly or indirectly from the strategic use of resettlement and consideration should be given to unplanned benefits generated by enhanced support of the resettlement community which should also be taken into account.
 - c) The inability to achieve the concrete objectives and outcomes intended should not be considered as a failure of the strategic use of resettlement, rather, relevant constraints impacting the progress to achieve those objectives should be taken into account.
 - d) In some cases, achieving protection and solutions dividends requires sustained commitments by resettlement countries, including forms of financial assistance to support for self-reliance and livelihoods strategy in the host country; in this connection, engaged resettlement States may need to forge greater cooperation within their respective government structures and between ministries.

IV. Roles and responsibilities of stakeholders and core/contact groups

15. Effective implementation of the strategic use of resettlement in the designated priority situations requires a collaborative approach; it is a shared responsibility among the resettlement States, UNHCR and other relevant resettlement partners; it is not the exclusive responsibility of UNHCR. Such a collaborative approach is expected to start from the onset of initiatives, for instance when defining protection dividends deriving from the resettlement engagement.
16. In each situation, it is essential that at least one Resettlement State takes the “lead” jointly with UNHCR to move the process forward. In certain situations, a “core group” or “contact group” may be appropriately established. Such ‘core” or “contact” groups have the added value of eliciting the concrete support of the resettlement countries joining the group, increasing resettlement places and mobilizing other types of resources, clarifying a common purpose, improving



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information sharing and dialogue among stakeholders, and bringing more predictability and transparency to the process.

17. Throughout the process of implementing the strategic use of resettlement, resettlement partners engaged in selected priority situations need to be proactive in maintaining open and transparent communications and dialogue, including with concerned countries of asylum.

V. De-listing a priority situation

18. Under the chairship of Sweden and the United States of America during the WGR/ATCR process in 2009-2011, tangible progress has been made for the seven priority situations thanks to active engagement by resettlement partners. Two out of the seven priority situations (Uzbekistan and the Pacific Island States), were considered as resolved and two new priority situations (Colombians and Afghans in Pakistan) were introduced at the 2011 ATCR.⁴
19. The list of priority situations for the strategic use of resettlement is not static, but rather of a dynamic nature. In deciding whether to remove a situation from the list of priority situations, the following elements are relevant:

Strategic benefits and outcomes realized:

- a) Resettlement objectives have been met and resettlement needs have been – or are largely in the process of being – adequately addressed.
- b) Expected protection and solutions dividends have been achieved in conjunction with adequately addressing any residual resettlement needs.

Resettlement firmly sustained:

- c) Where multi-year / sustained commitments have been secured to adequately address the resettlement needs, the situation may no longer figure among the priority situations for discussion at WGR/ATCR fora; however, monitoring and evaluation of progress against resettlement objectives and protection dividends will continue.

Lack of progress and little prospects for progress:

- d) Should there be no progress made within a reasonable timeframe, a thorough review may be undertaken so as to consider whether to keep the situation in the list of priority situations for a strategic use of resettlement.
20. There is no automatic correlation between the strategic use of resettlement and materialization of other durable solutions for refugee populations not considered for resettlement; outcomes may surface over a longer period, and the lack of voluntary repatriation or local integration prospects of remaining refugee populations should not be considered as a failure of the strategic use of resettlement. A situation should normally not be removed from the list when wider strategic benefits are just starting to emerge

⁴UNHCR, ATCR 2011 background document “Updated Fact Sheets on priority resettlement initiatives”, July 2011



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VI. Way forward

21. UNHCR invites resettlement partners participating in the Working Group on Resettlement to further discuss the opportunities and challenges in implementing the strategic use of resettlement. In this respect, resettlement partners are encouraged to share good practices and lessons learned from their engagements in the strategic use of resettlement in general as well as in selected priority situations. UNHCR welcomes further reflection and discussion on development of mechanisms to jointly monitor and measure progress against resettlement objectives as well as protection dividends achieved through the strategic use of resettlement.

*Resettlement Service
Division of International Protection
UNHCR Headquarters, Geneva
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