

High Commissioner's Forum
(17 November 2005)

Chairman's Summary

As my Latin nature makes me rather undisciplined, I won't make a summary of our meeting, since it would be boring for us all. In any case, my lack of discipline has allowed me to interfere throughout the discussions and to react to and comment on your interventions.

I will instead concentrate on main two questions that were raised in today's debate and that I believe need to be clarified and eventually discussed further.

The first question is how we are going to "mainstream" Convention Plus effectively. The second is how we plan to deal with the problems on which agreement has not been reached through the work of the Core Groups.

On the question of mainstreaming, let me make clear that I will be responsible for mainstreaming Convention Plus. In so doing I will involve the Troika, which will have a Cabinet-like way of working, as well as our Senior Management Committee, which will become UNHCR's Policy Committee. So, while I will be responsible, I will fully involve UNHCR's senior management to ensure that things get done.

Structural changes will also need to be made. The creation of the Policy Development and Evaluation Unit will be an important element. In reorganizing the Department of International Protection and the Division of Operational Support, we will ensure that structures are set in place with mainstreaming in mind. These will provide support to the field and create additional horizontal links with the Bureaux. Mainstreaming of Convention Plus will also become a major concern for UNHCR's Bureaux and field offices.

That being said, we will also use a number of policy instruments, such as the Global Strategic Objectives and measurable targets, which we are in the process of setting for the next cycle, 2007 to 2009. The questions relating to mainstreaming of Convention Plus will also be given adequate treatment in our planning methodology and, notably, in Country Operations Plans.

Mainstreaming will not involve a "Christmas tree" approach, which would simply be to add up all of the initiatives under way – the Somali Comprehensive Plan of Action, Afghanistan Plus, and the Strengthening Protection Capacity Project, for example – and label this *mainstreaming* of Convention Plus. Obviously, these initiatives will be followed up and pursued but this is not the whole of mainstreaming.

Through mainstreaming I would like to achieve a comprehensive approach in all programmes and activities. We must be aiming to attain durable solutions with a clear burden and responsibility sharing approach.

This brings me to a related issue, which is enhancing protection at the global level. I do believe that some may have the idea that we are getting involved in programmes for strengthening protection capacities in countries close to refugee crises, or those which are countries of transit for irregular secondary movement, with the objective of shifting responsibilities as opposed to sharing them. I want to be very clear that this is *not* our approach. We need to strengthen protection capacity in the South as well as in the North. In doing so in the North, we also need to expand resettlement opportunities, but this should not be a replacement for adequate asylum policies and for continuing to provide asylum.

The second question raised today was how we plan to deal with areas where no consensus has been reached. I think we need to adopt both a bottom-up and a top-down approach. We need to develop a bottom-up approach based on field experience. We need to learn by doing and to develop cooperation forged in action. By acting together in concrete situations, we will be able to overcome the apparent lack of consensus. But this is not enough. We also need to combine this with a top-down approach, by engaging the Executive Committee in discussions derived from those activities.

This is also the aim behind my proposal for maintaining a forum which is not linked to Convention Plus, but which will enable us to discuss future-oriented and strategic issues.

For all this to be possible, the question of partnerships is crucial. Partnership is relevant in all areas, especially in seeking to bridge the gap between relief and development as well as for the sustainability of durable solutions.

When it comes to partnership, we need to count on the NGO community – not only as partners in operations, but also as partners in setting our strategic directions. We need to establish a more strategic partnership with them. Of course, the most important partnership is with States: countries of asylum, countries of origin and donor countries. In this context, the empowerment of refugees is essential. We must empower the refugees themselves not only to become more self-reliant, but also to become true partners in the search for solutions to problems as a whole: for peace, democracy, and harmonious development.

A forum that is open and informal, but substantive in its discussions, can be an important instrument to foster a meaningful dialogue to enable UNHCR to deliver, both to meet the needs of refugees and to address the global concerns of the international community represented here today.

Thanks to all of you for your support and to the five countries – Canada, Denmark, Japan, South Africa and Switzerland – who have been our main partners in Convention Plus, as well as all the people involved.

Thank you.