



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



Expert Roundtable
Developing Guidance on
Onward Movement of Asylum-Seekers and Refugees

Co-organized by the Division of International Protection, UNHCR, and the Global Migration Centre (GMC) of the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva

Geneva, Switzerland

1-2 October 2015

Concept Note

Background

The majority of the world's asylum-seekers and refugees are hosted and stay in the country in which they first arrive, usually in their region of origin. However, a certain number also move onward to other countries in search of protection and solutions. The Syria crisis highlights the reality that refugees, even when welcomed by willing host countries in their immediate region, may feel compelled to move onwards, and sometimes in considerable numbers.¹ Such movements can place refugees and asylum-seekers at increased risk of violence, exploitation, death, and other rights violations associated with irregular travel. For States, they raise a number of important asylum management questions.

In some national contexts, specific measures and practices have been developed and applied to deal with people who have moved from another country. These may focus on people who move for non-protection related reasons, while in some cases, they address people who are believed to have received, or have had the opportunity to request and receive international protection in another country prior to their arrival. Where these incorporate safeguards ensuring that people in need of international protection can request and receive it, they may represent permissible and practical responses to onward movement. In some other cases, however, they may limit or preclude access to asylum, or penalize asylum-seekers contrary to the provisions of international law, or impact negatively on regional and international cooperation.

Building on past international dialogue and guidance on this subject,² the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) aims to develop guidance for States in responding to asylum-seekers and refugees who move onward for protection-related and other reasons. The guidance will articulate the relevant guiding principles as well as provide recommendations concerning specific approaches that States may adopt in response to such movements.

¹ Europe has received approximately 250,000 Syrian refugees, while almost 4 million are estimated to be in need of protection in countries in Syrians region, plus Egypt and North African countries.

² See *inter alia* UNHCR, *Summary Conclusions on the Concept of "Effective Protection" in the Context of Secondary Movements of Refugees and Asylum-Seekers (Lisbon Expert Roundtable, 9-10 December 2002)*, February 2003, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3fe9981e4.html>; Global Consultations, *Summary Conclusions: Article 31 of the 1951 Convention*, June 2003, Cambridge University Press, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/470a33b20.html>; UNHCR, *Expert Meeting on International Cooperation to Share Burdens and Responsibilities*, 28 June 2011, available at www.refworld.org/docid/4e9fed232.html.

This two-day Expert Roundtable will provide a forum for constructive, informal exchange to help inform the development of the guidance. Participants have been invited in order to provide insights into the legal framework, the phenomenon and challenges associated with onward movement, as well as States' responses and practice, in different regions.

Objectives and expected outcomes

Outcomes will include specific responses and recommendations from participants on a number of key legal, policy and practical responses to the phenomenon of onward movements, to help inform the development of UNHCR's guidance.

Content and structure

The meeting will take place over two days. Participants are expected to attend both days. The discussion will be based on a draft guidance document and an agenda with a specific set of questions to be shared with participants in advance.

Participants

This Expert Meeting is by invitation only. The invitation cannot be transferred. Participants will include selected representatives from different sectors and geographical regions, including State officials, members of the judiciary, academics, legal practitioners, NGOs, and international and regional organizations. Those taking part will be invited to take part in a constructive and open manner, bringing their expertise and experience to bear, but without limiting their input to formal or institutional positions, in order to facilitate wide-ranging and practical discussion of the complex issues foreseen for the agenda.

Documentation

A draft of the guidance and an agenda with a set of key questions to guide the discussion will be provided to participants in advance of the meeting.

Location and Dates

The Expert Roundtable will take place at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Maison de la Paix, Avenue de France, in Geneva, Switzerland, from **1-2 October 2015**.

19 June 2015