



UNHCR-NGO

JOINT EUROPEAN ADVOCACY STATEMENT ON RESETTLEMENT (25 June 2008, Geneva)

This advocacy statement on resettlement outlines the common positions of UNHCR and ECRE (European Council on Refugees and Exiles) on resettlement. It is designed to serve as a Europe-wide advocacy tool and to foster cooperation at the national level between UNHCR offices and NGO partners.

The objectives of this statement are to:

- encourage countries to expand, resume or start resettlement programmes;
- establish and enhance NGO-UNHCR partnerships in the area of resettlement;
- enhance the role of NGOs in the resettlement process, from pre-departure to post-arrival.



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Resettlement is a tool of international protection and durable solution for refugees, which requires effective and dynamic partnerships between States, UNHCR and Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Forging close and effective partnerships in resettlement ensures global consistency, transparency and operational integrity.

Objectives of resettlement

- To function as a tool for ensuring the protection of the most vulnerable refugees;
- To provide a durable solution for refugees for whom other solutions are not viable, particularly in large-scale and protracted refugee situations;
- To act as an instrument of international solidarity, and burden and responsibility sharing;
- To act as a complement to, and not as a substitute for, the provision of protection where needed for refugees and persons of concern to UNHCR;
- To function independently or in parallel with the other durable solutions of voluntary repatriation and local integration, and wherever possible in a complementary manner;
- To operate wherever possible in a strategic manner to maximize the benefits, directly or indirectly, for others in need of protection beyond the refugees being resettled (e.g. to improve asylum conditions in the host country);
- To strengthen asylum systems through the development of good practices in the reception and integration of resettled refugees, partnerships and resource mobilisation.

Advocacy positions

Global

- Reaffirm the protection and durable solutions – as opposed to the migratory or economic – nature of resettlement. Resettlement programmes are not to be used to select refugees according to domestic needs (e.g. labor market), but on the basis of protection and durable solution needs of refugees.
- Advocate for a non-discriminatory and needs-based approach to the selection of refugees for resettlement. Resettlement should be open to all refugees in need of this solution without prejudice to their nationality, ethnicity, linguistic skills, family links in Europe (or lack thereof), religious background, etc. Any identified need for resettlement should be in accordance with UNHCR's criteria.

- Organisations should work towards the withdrawal by all governments of ‘integration-potential criteria’ when selecting refugees. This criterion is subjective and is not based on the refugees’ need for protection. Integration is a ‘two-way process’ and refugees who might otherwise be seen as ‘vulnerable’, ‘difficult to integrate’ and/or in need of special services have the ability to become valued members of their communities, given adequate support.
- Encourage resettlement countries to enhance policies for emergency resettlement including through acceptance of resettlement submissions on a dossier basis. More broadly, advocate for greater selection of refugees on a dossier rather than interview mission basis. A dossier approach will minimise refugees being left without a durable solution due to a limited geographic scope of interview missions (which is often attributable to associated logistic challenges and access issues).
- Advocate resource allocation among resettlement country programmes, at the national and local levels, to expand capacity to address the needs of individuals with specific needs including women and girls at risk, refugee children and people with physical and mental health needs and older persons.
- Target ‘untouchable’ refugee caseloads to promote exceptional measures, which may include streamlining the resettlement process and expanding family reunification schemes.
- Highlight the ‘safeguards’ of UNHCR’s resettlement selection process which include individual case assessments and addressing exclusion issues according to international legal standards.
- Explore the possibility of governments providing additional resettlement places through developing private sponsorship programmes, particularly to facilitate family reunification, and ensuring resources are allocated to support such programmes.
- Raise public support for resettlement and use resettlement to facilitate public understanding of all refugees and to develop the integration and response capacity of receiving communities.
- Promote collective responsibility of all participants in the resettlement process to strengthen ownership and active participation.
- Promote increased flexibility in refugee resettlement selection by governments, including for refugees recognised under UNHCR mandate, based on protection needs and established resettlement criteria.

Europe-specific

- Promote the role of resettlement as an important and integral part of the external dimension of European Union asylum policy.
- Urge European countries to engage in regular resettlement and existing resettlement countries to expand the number of places made available for resettlement.
- Promote the exchange of information and knowledge regarding resettlement activities between existing and potential resettlement States, as well as between NGOs and government counterparts.
- Facilitate and support resettlement training opportunities as an advocacy tool.
- Support the European Commission and resettlement countries to show leadership in helping other EU Member States (and European countries) to join the international effort, on an equitable and proportionate basis.
- Advocate for a more coordinated EU approach to resettlement, whether within or beyond the context of a Regional Protection Programme, and within an EU resettlement scheme as announced by the European Commission in its Policy Plan of June 2008. Urge for any such eventual scheme to result in additional resettlement places beyond what countries currently provide, to offer a high standard of protection and integration support for resettled refugees and to not complicate the administration of resettlement (for UNHCR and NGO partners).
- Influence the establishment of the European Asylum Support Office to ensure it brings added value through a coordinated approach to asylum and resettlement. Tasks of the Office might include the dissemination of European good practices surrounding dossier submissions, joint missions, quota management and coordination of particular refugee populations.
- Advocate for greater resources (including financial) and policy flexibility for resettlement. Relating to the European Commission, propose that it broaden the ERF (European Refugee Fund) criteria in

support of resettlement or introduce a dedicated resettlement fund. Regarding UNHCR donor countries, encourage them to supplement funding commitments with pledges to welcome a proportional number of refugees for resettlement. More generally, recognize that funds must not be diverted to resettled refugees away from the protection of asylum seekers or from refugees in countries of first asylum.

- Work constructively to address issues not only with the Commission, but also with the European Parliament and European Council; notwithstanding the Commission's important role in bringing EU States together formally and informally.

Core policy documents as tools

- Encourage all parties involved in resettlement to use UNHCR and NGO core policy documents as collective tools on the resettlement process.²
- Require use of *Baseline Standard Operating Procedures on Resettlement*,³ as a baseline model for all UNHCR field operations, to ensure a level of global harmonization, transparency and predictability in resettlement delivery.
- Encourage use of the *Heightened Risk Identification Tool*⁴ or similar participatory methodologies by UNHCR staff and NGO partners to assist with the identification of individuals at risk and those who require immediate intervention.
- Support UNHCR's commitment and efforts to combat fraud and corruption to preserve the integrity of resettlement programmes.⁵

Procedure

- Establish partnerships for resettlement as a joint activity between governments, central and local authorities, municipalities, private economic actors, NGOs, civil society stakeholders, refugees/former refugees and UNHCR.⁶
- Recognize the crucial role of NGOs in the resettlement process, from refugee identification to reception and integration. In Europe in particular, a large number of NGOs have strong expertise in resettlement and others are keen to develop this expertise.
- Promote the participation of refugees in reception and integration programmes.
- For UNHCR European offices, provide support for tripartite arrangements at the national level. Develop current and create new partnerships to promote resettlement through advocacy efforts, as well as to directly engage stakeholders through training and operational capacity building. In this context, recognise the especially important role of NGOs to raise public support for resettlement and to underpin the integration of resettled refugees.
- For ECRE's member agencies, further define organisational and network strengths and develop proposals for opportunities for NGOs to create partnerships with all relevant stakeholders, particularly UNHCR and European governments. This strategy can be drawn from the information provided in the ECRE member survey on involvement and/or interest in participating in resettlement activities.⁷

¹ Sources: NGO/UNHCR meeting on 29 September 2006, Vincent Cochetel's 27 September 2007 presentation at the NGO-UNHCR Pre-Excom Consultations, Lisbon conclusions from November 2007, UNHCR and ECRE's contributions to the European Commission's Green Paper on the Common European Asylum System of June 2007, NGO Statement on Resettlement at Global Consultations on International Protection from 22-24 May 2002.

² Core policy documents include:

• **UNHCR**

- UNHCR, *Resettlement Handbook (revised September 2007)*, 1 November 2004, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/refworld/rwmain?docid=3ae6b35e0>
- UNHCR, *Multilateral Framework of Understandings on Resettlement*, 16 September 2004, FORUM/2004/6, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/refworld/rwmain?docid=41597d0a4>
- UNHCR, *Framework for Durable Solutions for Refugees and Persons of Concern*, 1 May 2003, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/refworld/rwmain?docid=4124b6a04>
- UNHCR, *Refugee Resettlement. An International Handbook to Guide Reception and Integration*, September 2002, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/refworld/rwmain?docid=405189284>

• **European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE)**

- *The Way Forward: Europe's role in the global refugee protection system: The Way Forward: Europe's role in the global refugee protection system: Towards a European Resettlement Programme*, April 2005, available at: <http://www.ecre.org/files/Wfresex1.pdf>
- *Guarding Refugee Protection Standards in Regions of Origin*, December 2005, available at: <http://www.ecre.org/files/regions.pdf>
- *Responding to the Asylum and Access Challenge: An Agenda for Comprehensive Engagement in Protracted Refugee Situations*, April 2003, available at: <http://www.ecre.org/files/gmf.pdf>

• **Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME)**

Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe, *Resettlement fact sheets*, January 2008.

• **International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) Europe**

- *Welcome to Europe: A Comparative Review of Resettlement in Europe*, 2007, available at: http://www.icmc.net/pdf/welcome_to_europe.pdf

³ UNHCR, *Baseline Standard Operating Procedures on Resettlement*, 20 June 2007, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/refworld/rwmain?docid=46f7c2462>

⁴ UNHCR, *Heightened Risk Identification Tool (HRIT)*, 20 June 2007, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/refworld/rwmain?docid=46f7c0cd2>

⁵ UNHCR, *Policy and Procedural Guidelines: Addressing Resettlement Fraud Perpetrated by Refugees*, March 2008.

⁶ See methodology developed under ICMC, *Welcome to Europe, Practical Cooperation for European Network Project*, 2007.

⁷ European Council on Refugees and Exiles, *Resettlement by Europe – The actual and potential role of NGOs*, June 2007. Online, available at http://www.ecre.org/files/ECRE_Resettlement%20Survey2.pdf