

# Towards a global compact on refugees

## Strengthening international cooperation to ease the plight of refugees in the world

### SUMMARY

The recent large-scale flows of refugees and migrants have brought to the world's attention more forcefully than ever the plight of persons who are forced to flee their homes due to war, insecurity or persecution. They have also exposed how ill-prepared the international community has been to deal with this challenge and how disproportionate the distribution of the burden of caring for such people has been among countries.

In 2016, to enhance preparedness for refugee crises, improve the situation of refugees and relieve the burden on host societies, the UN member states convened in New York and adopted a declaration paving the way for a non-binding international compact on refugees. They annexed to this declaration a comprehensive refugee response framework that spelled out a series of short and longer-term measures to address refugee crises. The framework has been applied in several pilot countries and the lessons learnt have fed into a global compact on refugees, which is being drafted by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) through broad consultations with various stakeholders. The second draft was published at the end of April; consultations on it took place from 8 to 10 May 2018. A third draft was published on 4 June.

The global compact focuses on international-, regional- and national-level mechanisms for achieving a fairer distribution of the responsibilities related to refugees, and on areas where action can be improved. It has been criticised, among other things, for its non-binding character and for excluding victims of natural disasters from its scope.



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## The need for fairer burden- and responsibility-sharing

Protecting refugees is a matter of customary international law and a legal obligation assumed by the countries that have ratified the [1951 Geneva Refugee Convention \(hereafter, the convention\) or its 1967 Protocol](#). The convention imposes a range of [obligations](#) on these states, most importantly the principle of *non-refoulement*, which prohibits them from returning refugees back to a situation of risk. Moreover, the convention also grants to recognised refugees and regular asylum-seekers access to a series of rights and public services, such as primary education. However, the protection granted to refugees around the world is very unequal in practice, as a result of a complex interplay between a variety of factors. A description of these factors is provided below.

### The ratification of the 1951 Geneva Refugee Convention

[Not all countries](#) in the world have ratified the convention and some have ratified it with important reservations. Furthermore, many refugees are in countries where they do not benefit from the provisions of the convention. Such is the case, as shown in Figure 1 below, with Turkey (which has ratified the convention with an important geographical reservation limiting its scope to European refugees), Pakistan, Lebanon, Jordan, Bangladesh, Iraq and India. This creates imbalances in the share of the burden assumed by host countries, as the state parties to the convention have more stringent obligations.

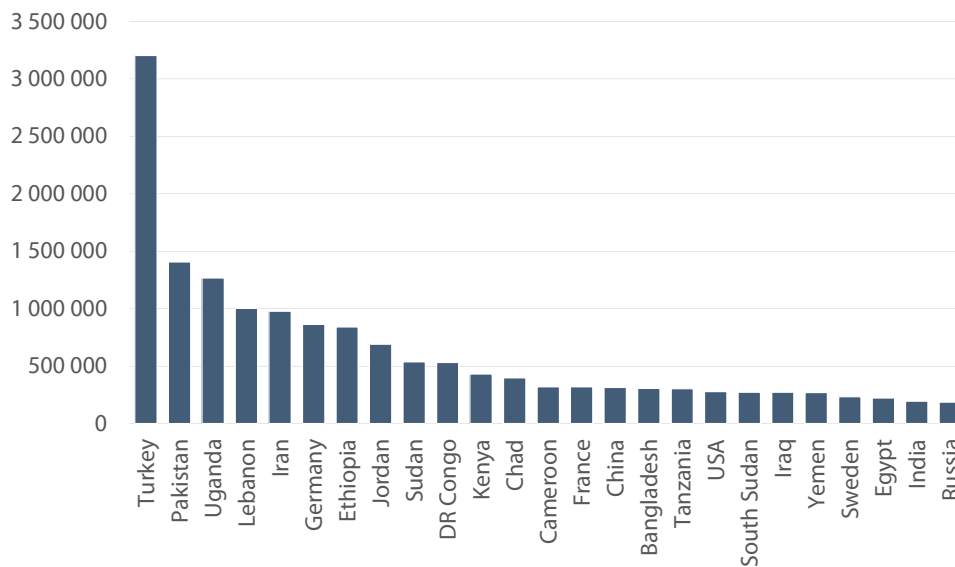
### Distribution of refugees by country

In recent years, the world has witnessed large and sudden flows of refugees and other persons in need of international protection, particularly from high-intensity civil-conflict situations, and has grown aware of their plight. According to data gathered by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (the UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR), in 2015, for the first time since 1994, the total number of refugees in the world (excluding Palestinian refugees who are in a special protracted situation under the mandate of a separate UN agency) exceeded [15 million persons](#). The upward trend continued, and in the first half of 2017 refugee numbers grew further to [18.5 million](#), a level unprecedented in UNHCR recorded history. What is more, these numbers only include persons who have sought protection in another country. The number of those displaced inside their own country is much higher, with those uprooted in 2017 but remaining in their own country reaching a record high in a decade.<sup>1</sup> As of June 2017, more than half of the refugees in the world came from only three countries: Syria, Afghanistan and South Sudan.

The vast majority of refugees are hosted by developing countries. [According to the UNHRC](#), 'as mass displacement across the world continues to grow, it is usually low- and middle-income countries that shoulder much of the responsibility for refugees'. Some civil-society [voices](#) have criticised developed countries for hosting but a small share of refugees: 'It is deeply disturbing that rich countries that have the capacity to receive and host refugees are not stepping up to this responsibility. To date 85 % of the world's refugees are hosted by developing countries'. However, such criticism does not take into account the relative population size of the host countries. In mid-2017, Europe (not counting Turkey, which alone hosted 3.2 million people, mostly Syrian refugees) hosted 2.5 million out of a total of 18.5 million refugees in the world, i.e. 13.5 % above its share of the world's population. In the same year, sub-Saharan Africa was the region hosting the most refugees in the world: 5.7 million.

The fact that most refugees are hosted by developing countries is also due to the geographical proximity of the latter to areas of conflict. People fleeing war, persecution and violence often seek refuge in neighbouring countries.

Figure 1: Top 25 countries in the world ranked by the number of refugees and people in a refugee-like situation, excluding asylum-seekers, living in them in mid-2017



Data source: [UNHCR statistical data](#).

As Figure 1 above shows, from among the 25 countries hosting the world's biggest refugee populations, only three – Germany, France and Sweden – are EU Member States.

### Protracted refugee situations

Sheer numbers do not adequately reflect the burden assumed by host countries. The quality of the protection and integration paths that host societies provide to refugees are just as important as their willingness to host large numbers of refugees, and often have a direct impact on these numbers. While it is indeed true that most refugees flee to developing countries, the latter are often unable or unwilling to grant them the rights under the convention, such as the right to residence, and to open integration and naturalisation paths for them into their society. This leads to protracted refugee situations that can last for years or decades. Long-lasting civil conflicts in certain countries such as Somalia, eastern DR Congo, South Sudan, Sudan-Darfur in Africa, or Afghanistan, Iraq and more recently Syria in the Middle East, also contribute to protracted situations for refugees, as a return to their home country is often impossible under the current circumstances.

According to the 2017 [UNHCR Global Trends report](#), between 40 % and two-thirds of all refugees in the world, including the Palestinian ones, have been in a protracted situation in recent years. This is a significant increase compared to previous times is largely due to the fact that many Syrian refugees found themselves in such a situation for the first time in the end of 2016. The UNHCR defines a protracted refugee situation as one in which '25 000 or more refugees from the same nationality have been in exile for five consecutive years or more in a given asylum country'.

According to the UNHCR report, none of the EU countries yet hosts a protracted refugee situation, which is likely due to the way they have historically dealt with refugees: those who are granted refugee status are either provided with integration and naturalisation paths or returned to their home countries when conditions allow.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, as large numbers of Syrian refugees only started arriving in Europe in 2014, there has not been enough time for a protracted refugee situation to develop in EU countries.

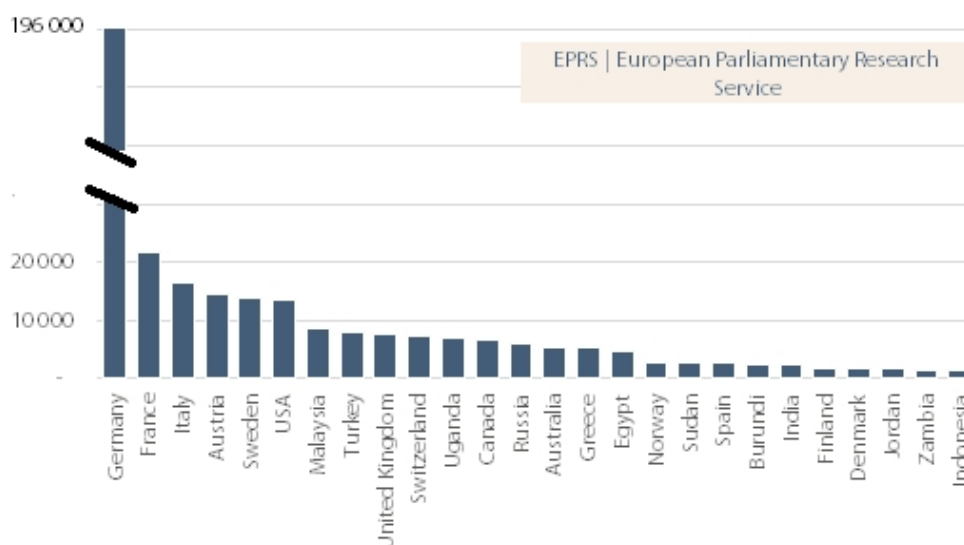
### Treatment of refugees

Refugees in many developing countries, [particularly in Africa](#), are confined to camps. Their freedom of movement is severely restricted and they have very limited or no access to work, education and

health services, often in violation of the international obligations assumed by these countries. The situation is very different for persons who are granted formal refugee status in developed countries. In the EU, as per the legislation in force, asylum-seekers and recognised refugees are given [access](#) to employment under certain conditions and provided with a range of basic [social services](#). These discrepancies in the quality of protection provided encourage asylum-seekers to leave their first country of asylum and undertake long and perilous journeys to countries offering better protection.

Looking at the number of decisions granting international protection, this situation is very different compared with Figure 1 above, with European countries coming in top positions.

Figure 2: Number of decisions granting international protection (Geneva Convention status and complementary protection status) in the first half of 2017



Data source: [UNHCR statistical data](#).

Figure 2 shows that among the top 25 states in the world, ranked by the number of decisions to grant international protection in the first half of 2017, 10 are EU Member States, with Germany leading the entire group with a much higher number of decisions compared to other states in the EU or the rest of the world. The first five are all EU Member States. Only four of the 25 are African countries, despite the large number of refugees hosted on the continent. Such data reflect the fact that the cases of refugees in Europe are treated on an individual basis. Conversely, refugees in developing countries are often granted group recognition, and their identification and status determination are usually handled by the UNHCR.

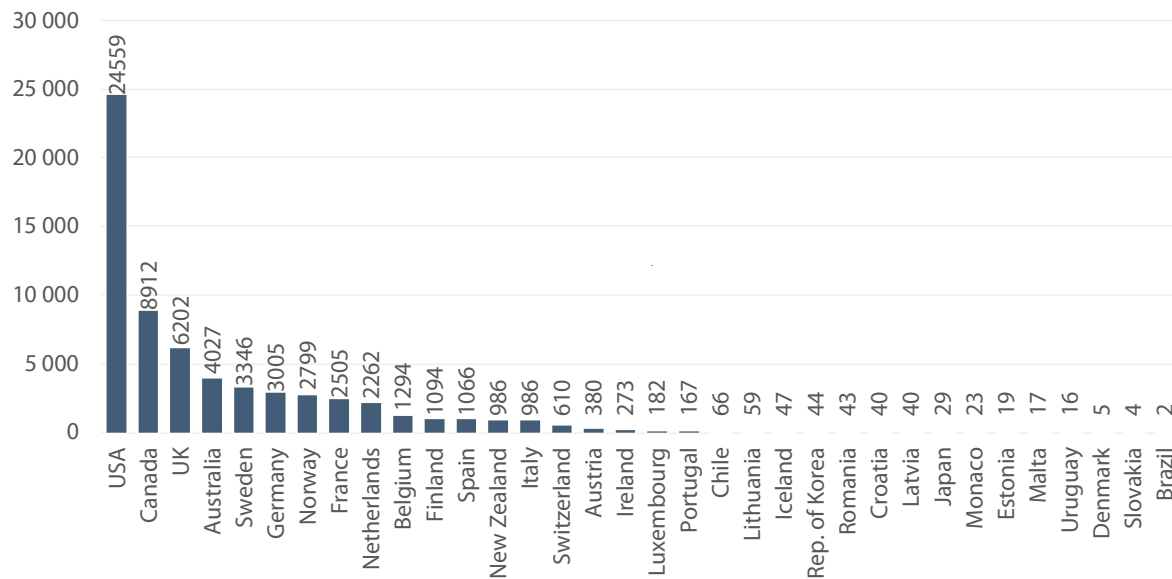
The difficulties the EU has faced in distributing the refugees arriving on its shores more fairly among its Member States illustrate well how difficult it is to implement such solidarity-based burden-sharing approaches in practice. The [temporary system for the relocation of asylum-seekers](#) from frontline countries of arrival (Greece and Italy) to other Member States put in place by the EU in 2015 has faced opposition from some EU countries, despite its binding character. On the other hand, the EU-Turkey [deal](#) from 2016, under which Turkey would take back any irregular migrants crossing over from its territory to Greek islands and the EU would admit an equal number of vulnerable Syrian refugees from Turkey and provide substantial financial assistance to refugees already present in Turkey, has proven that such approaches based on responsibility-sharing can be [effective](#).

## Resettlement

When neither return nor integration into host societies is a viable solution, resettlement of refugees to third countries is an alternative. According to the [UNHCR](#), 'resettlement is the transfer of refugees from an asylum country to another State that has agreed to admit them and ultimately grant them permanent settlement'. The number of countries admitting refugees via resettlement has

traditionally been small and the places provided largely insufficient compared to identified needs. According to its mandate, the UNHCR is in charge of identifying refugees in need of resettlement; once this has been done, it assists those who have been accepted for making the shift. The annual number of resettled refugees is only around 1 %<sup>3</sup> of the total number of refugees in the world. Refugees identified as being in need of resettlement are usually those in dangerous and vulnerable situations, who have particular problems that cannot be addressed in their host country. The resettlement quotas provided by participating countries are lower than the number of persons proposed by the UNHCR for resettlement (75 000 in in 2017 compared to 170 000 the previous year). In 2017, there was also a [54 % drop](#) in resettlement places year on year, mainly due to the fact that the US, which is the main recipient, had significantly reduced its admission of resettled refugees.

Figure 3: Number of resettled refugees by resettlement country in 2017



Data source: [UNHCR](#).

As Figure 3 above clearly shows, the number of countries that accept a significant number of refugees for resettlement is quite small, with the US, Canada, UK and Australia topping the list, followed by several European countries. Participating countries from other continents are very few and their quotas low.

To fulfil its share of responsibility with regard to global resettlement and to increase Member States' commitment to the process, the EU is working to adopt a binding resettlement [framework](#) for its Member States. The [proposal](#) it has produced to this end includes common EU rules on the admission of third-country nationals, provisions on resettlement procedures and provisions on EU financial support for Member States' efforts, among other things. Both the European Parliament and the Council of the EU, in their positions on the proposal, have recognised the role of the UNHCR in the process.

## New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants

The above-mentioned imbalances in the protection granted to refugees among various countries in the world and shortcomings in the protection mechanism have led to the recognition of a need to improve both international cooperation and the way the burden and the responsibility are shared. While the convention imposes certain obligations on countries with regard to the treatment of refugees, countries are not legally obliged to help other countries that are overburdened with large numbers of refugees. While the preamble to the convention does highlight the importance of international cooperation, an attempt to introduce a more binding provision failed at the time of its drafting.<sup>4</sup>

Based on the above concerns, and mindful of the refugee crises unfolding in recent years, in September 2016 the high-level plenary of the UN General Assembly adopted the [New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants](#). In the declaration, the 193 UN member states committed to 'a more equitable sharing of the burden and responsibility for hosting and supporting the world's refugees'. More concretely, the declaration reaffirmed the need to protect refugees and respect their human rights, and underlined that these are international responsibilities that have to be borne more equitably and predictably. In accordance with this principle, the declaration pledged more support to countries that host refugees. The declaration committed the UN member states to work towards the adoption of a global compact on refugees (GCR) and a [global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration](#). It was decided that the two compacts would be developed along separate tracks.

## Comprehensive refugee response framework

The UNHCR report presented at the high-level conference in September 2016 included a [comprehensive refugee response framework](#) (CRRF), which was subsequently adopted together with the New York Declaration as an annex to it. The CRRF is the central mechanism proposed by the declaration at the level of practical action. Its stated objective is to deliver a predictable and comprehensive response to large-scale movements of refugees. More concretely, the CRRF aims to ensure better inclusion of refugees in their host communities as a response to protracted situations of encampment that have been prevalent in many developing countries. Countries participating in the CRRF pledge to improve refugees' access to education, health and other social services, as well as employment. Furthermore, the CRRF calls for more international support to countries that host refugees, for more resettlement solutions, and for efforts to create the conditions for refugees to return home whenever possible.

Several African countries – Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda and Zambia – have committed to applying the CRRF to refugees within their own territories, while a regional approach has been adopted with regard to the Somali refugees. The central American countries participating in the CRRF are Belize, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Panama. As a result of the pledges entered into via the CRRF, most countries have made [notable progress](#). For example, Djibouti adopted a new refugee law in January 2017 and improved refugees' access to education. Ethiopia, which hosts the second-largest refugee population in Africa, enrolled some 20 000 additional refugee children in primary education in 2017 and provided refugees with access to civil registration. The country also plans to reserve for refugees [30 %](#) of the jobs in newly created industrial parks. Uganda, which is often regarded as an African model for the treatment of refugees, given its [progressive approach](#) involving providing refugees with substantial freedoms and access to land and public services, has pledged to ensure that all refugee children and adolescents have access to education at all levels. The commitments are in line with the obligations and the recommendations put forward by the convention, thereby encouraging countries to comply with them. The CRRF also brings pledges of international solidarity in return for a fair treatment of refugees. The CRRF has been expected to provide valuable lessons to be incorporated in the global refugee compact.

## Drafting the global compact

Given its mandate as the UN agency in charge of refugees, the UNHCR has incurred the main [responsibility](#) for drafting the GCR in consultation with states and other relevant stakeholders. Several such consultations (including with NGOs) and five [thematic discussions](#) were held in 2017. A [zero draft](#) of the compact was published in January 2018, followed by a [first draft](#) in March 2018, a [second draft](#) a month later and a [third draft](#) in June. Formal consultations have taken place to discuss the drafts with the states and are scheduled to continue until July 2018. The final draft will be submitted by the High Commissioner for Refugees in his 2018 annual report to the UN General Assembly.



## Timeline of events related to the drafting of the global compact on refugees

Date	Steps
September 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New York Declaration agreed by consensus of member states at the UN General Assembly high-level meeting</li> <li>• The CRRF is adapted as an annex to the New York Declaration</li> </ul>
2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">The comprehensive refugee response framework (CRRF)</a> is applied in more than a dozen countries</li> <li>• <a href="#">Five thematic discussions</a> on GCR key aspects, second half of 2017</li> <li>• <a href="#">High Commissioner's dialogue on protection challenges</a>, December 2017</li> </ul>
2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Zero draft</a>, 31 January</li> <li>• First formal consultation, 13 and 14 February 2018</li> <li>• <a href="#">Draft 1</a>, 9 March</li> <li>• Second formal consultation, 20 and 21 March 2018</li> <li>• Third formal consultation, 10 and 11 April 2018</li> <li>• <a href="#">Draft 2</a>, 30 April</li> <li>• Fourth formal consultation, 8, 9 and 10 May 2018</li> <li>• <a href="#">Draft 3</a>, 4 June 2018</li> <li>• Fifth formal consultation, 12 and 13 June 2018</li> <li>• Sixth formal consultation, 3 and 4 July 2018</li> </ul>
Early November 2019	The GCR will be presented to the UN General Assembly together with the UNHCR annual report

According to the existing drafts, the objectives of the global compact are to:

- ease pressures on host countries;
- enhance refugee self-reliance;
- expand access to third-country solutions; and
- support conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity.

## Key points of the draft compact as of June 2018

According to the [third draft](#) dated 4 June 2018 (hereafter referred to as the 'draft compact') – the latest to have been published – the global compact on refugees provides 'a basis for predictable and equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing among all United Nations member states, together with other relevant stakeholders as appropriate'. It consists of two parts: i) the CRRF, as adopted by the UN General Assembly in Annex I to the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants; and ii) a programme of action, which facilitates the application of the CRRF.

### A voluntary approach based on international norms

The draft compact explicitly says that the measures it contains do not intend to be prescriptive to host states, as the aim is to ease pressure on these states through the help of other states and stakeholders. It also explicitly mentions that 'The Compact is not legally binding'.

The scope of the protection provided by the compact has apparently been the subject of some controversy during the negotiations. While the convention defines a refugee as a person who, 'owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality

and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country', draft two of the compact in its first article listed a broader range of circumstances forcing people to become refugees – such as serious human rights violations, armed conflict, violence or serious public disorder – suggesting therefore a broader scope of the definition of a refugee than under the convention. This text has been deleted in the third draft.

A new section, introduced in draft two and kept in draft three, entitled 'Guiding principles', states that the compact is grounded in the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol and the central principle of *non-refoulement* upheld in both documents, but also in relevant international human-rights instruments, such as the UN Convention against Torture, which grants similar protection to persons who are not actually refugees. It also makes reference to regional refugee protection regimes as well as to humanitarian principles and the purposes and principles of the UN Charter that are relevant to refugees. The draft compact calls on all states to ratify the convention and its protocol, while also admitting that some states, even though they are not yet party to the convention, have offered considerable help to refugees.

Age, gender and diversity (including disability-related) considerations have been strengthened in the second draft and kept in the third draft.

#### An interconnected, multi-stakeholder- and partnership-based approach

The draft compact brings important new perspectives into play compared to the existing international refugee regime. It assigns an important role to approaches fighting the root causes of large-scale refugee crises and refugee flows, such as preventing and solving conflict; respecting international humanitarian law, alleviating poverty; reducing disaster risks; and ensuring respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, in particular by putting an end to discrimination on grounds of gender, race, colour, religion or belief. The need to link with policies supporting development in countries of origin, in line with the UN 2030 Agenda, is also recognised.

Very importantly, the draft compact encourages the involvement not only of state actors but also of other stakeholders, such as local authorities and private entities. The multi-stakeholder- and partnership-based approach is at the core of the vision promoted by the draft. Most importantly, it envisages involving refugees and host communities in designing the appropriate policy responses. Local authorities and other local actors, which are often in the first line when dealing with refugees, should also be the main beneficiaries of assistance provided by the international community. Networks of cities and municipalities hosting refugees are invited to share good practices in dealing with refugees in an urban environment. The important role civil-society organisations and faith-based organisations can play in hosting refugees is also recognised.

The section on private sector involvement, already [strengthened in draft two](#) as compared to draft one, [receives further reinforcement in draft three](#), which encourages the private sector to invest and create jobs both in areas populated by refugees and in their countries of origin, where they could return. States are expected to provide a supporting role in this respect. Public-private partnerships are also taken into consideration.

#### The programme of action

The programme of action contains two main parts.

Part A outlines mechanisms on burden- and responsibility-sharing at international, and regional or country level. Recognising the 'immense' contribution of states that receive and host refugees to the good of humanity, the draft calls for support from the whole international community. The proposed mechanisms will be based on good faith and common trust among all the states, as they are in essence a voluntary approach. The proposed international mechanism will consist of a global refugee forum at ministerial level, which, according to the third draft, will convene every four years. Initially, it will meet in 2019 and then again in 2021, before the four-year interval of meetings begins. The forum will provide participating states with the opportunity to make pledges in various forms,



such as providing financial, material and technical assistance to host countries; making changes to national policies, laws and practice with regard to the treatment of refugees; and providing resettlement places and complementary pathways for admission (e.g. scholarships, labour mobility and private sponsorship schemes). Such pledges will be reviewed for their fulfilment by the forum.

Several mechanisms are foreseen at regional and country level. Host countries can propose national arrangements involving the UNHCR, other international organisations, non-governmental entities and refugees. Such arrangements could lead to the establishment of a comprehensive plan. In the case of a significant refugee situation (such as overwhelming refugee flows or a protracted situation that gives rise to an opportunity for a solution, such as repatriation), host states can call for the activation of a support platform. Such a platform would be activated and assisted by the UNHCR, and further supported through the holding of a solidarity conference with the participation of relevant actors. Regional and sub-regional bodies or groupings are expected to play a key role, including by exchanging good practices.

Part B of the programme of action identifies a list of areas where action on behalf of refugees can be improved, drawing on lessons learned from past comprehensive responses and the application of the CRRF. The overall objectives are those stated in the draft compact, namely, to improve refugees' self-reliance and capacity to care for themselves and to ease the pressure on host communities. The draft compact recognises the challenges refugees pose for the development of host communities and calls for an approach based on shared and inclusive economic growth, which would include refugees and from which host communities would benefit. For a number of areas, the draft makes recommendations that go beyond the obligations imposed on states by the convention. For example, it calls for expanded access to secondary and tertiary education, particularly for women and girls. It further calls for the creation of employment targeted at refugees and recommends a series of measures to increase their employability. In the area of health, it encourages expanding access to national health systems. Access to accommodation and food are other priorities outlined, with recommendations for developing specific measures targeting women and children.

Part B of the programme of action also outlines a threefold set of solutions to end refugee crises, based on voluntary repatriation when conditions allow, integration into the host society; and resettlement to third countries. In order to facilitate voluntary and sustainable repatriation, the international community is encouraged to support countries of origin with resources and capacity-building actions to develop an appropriate environment for the return of refugees. While return to the country of origin is seen as the preferable solution, it is not always possible. In such cases, the draft advocates applying alternatives, such as resettlement. In order to enhance access to this solution, the UNHCR will draft a three-year strategy to expand the number of resettlement countries and to consolidate emerging resettlement countries, using good practices and lessons learnt from the [Emerging Resettlement Countries Joint Support Mechanism \(ERCM\)](#). Established within the UNHCR framework, the ERCM aims to 'enhance resettlement activities undertaken by new and emerging resettlement countries' including through using the expertise of experienced resettlement countries and other actors. As explained previously, the number of resettlement countries has traditionally been low. Recently, their pool has increased, and over 20 countries, most of which in Europe but also in Latin America, have developed their own emerging resettlement programmes. Providing assistance to them is crucial to ensure the successful integration of refugees in their new host societies, which is the ultimate aim of resettlement. The draft also points to other pathways for admitting refugees to third countries, such as family reunification, educational opportunities (such as scholarships), private refugee admission programmes and work mobility. The draft also makes recommendations on the durable integration of refugees in their host countries, highlighting that this remains a sovereign decision of states. It draws attention to the need to support developing states in the process.

Finally, probably also in response to criticism concerning its purely voluntary character, the draft compact recognises the importance of follow-up and review, to which a separate section IV is dedicated. The UNHCR is expected to develop a broad set of indicators for the first global refugee

forum in 2019, in order to measure progress on the implementation of the compact. Collecting reliable and comparable data by developing harmonised and interoperable standards on refugees is called for as a part of the Programme of action.

## Stakeholders' position

Civil-society organisations have been very actively involved in the drafting process from the beginning. They have also often [criticised](#) various aspects of the future compact, most strongly in connection with the fact that state commitments remain *ad hoc* and voluntary, which in their view does not bring a substantial change to the existing system. Civil society has also come out in favour of strengthening the current protection system and providing more solutions for the inclusion of refugees in their host communities. Additionally, as a result of civil society advocacy, the possibility of giving refugees a greater say about policies directly affecting them has been provided in the draft compact. Other stakeholders, such as [Public Services International](#), a federation of trade unions of public services employees, has underlined the need to focus on women and children issues, among other things. The second draft has heightened the emphasis on vulnerable groups.

Other [civil-society groups](#) have criticised the narrow scope of the compact, which focuses on refugees as defined by the convention, yet does not include victims of natural disasters, environmental degradation and climate change, even though the third draft admits that 'while not in themselves causes of refugee movements, climate, environmental degradation and natural disasters may interact with the drivers of refugee movements'. These environmental drivers of migration are dealt with in the draft global compact on migration, on the other hand. There is [no international legal recognition](#) for such [groups](#), although the situations pushing them to move are often as dire as those of refugees.

There have been [accusations](#) that developed states intend to elude their full responsibility by providing funds to developing countries hosting refugees instead of accepting larger numbers themselves. Merely providing more money is insufficient, argue organisations such as Amnesty International. The draft compact actually makes clear that 'offers of resettlement and other pathways will be an indispensable part of the mechanisms' of cooperation, and responsibility- and burden-sharing.

## European Union position

The EU has been involved in the UN-launched process for the preparation of the global refugee compact and has clearly stated its support for it. At the thematic debates in October 2017, the EU Delegation in Geneva delivered a series of statements on the EU's behalf in the various thematic sections.<sup>5</sup> In its [statements](#) at the outset of the consultations on the zero draft, the EU expressed its support for the process, and underlined the need for international solidarity. It also underlined that special attention should be paid to women, youth and children, persons with disabilities; that preparedness for large flows of refugees should be enhanced; and that socio-economic inclusion of refugees in host societies could be improved by providing access to education, health, employment and livelihoods. The EU also proposed that the programme of action should promote the inclusion of refugees into reporting on the Sustainable Development Goals.

In its [reaction to the first draft](#), delivered in April 2018, the EU underlined that the GRC should be seen as an opportunity to better involve development actors in the protection of refugees. The EU 'welcomed that UNHCR has incorporated many of the comments made during the first round of consultations and strengthened the language in many sections of the first draft'. Preparedness, early identification registration and status-determination of persons are essential in the EU's view, as are approaches avoiding encampment from the beginning. The EU is in favour of assessing people's refugee status individually rather than offering them group-based protection (often used in the case of large flows). The EU also recognises the inter-linkage between refugees' and host communities' welfare. If self-reliance, skills acquisition and education are fostered, refugees would be better

prepared for all durable solutions. Therefore, the EU supports assigning priority to giving refugees access to education up to the tertiary level. It also believes that voluntary repatriation, where conditions allow it, can be highly beneficial for the countries of origin, as returnees can bring positive input to them.

The European Parliament has been closely following the drafting process of the global refugee compact, which it strongly supports. It was present at the New York 2016 summit, with an *ad hoc* delegation of three Members from the LIBE committee. In a [resolution](#) adopted in April 2018, the Parliament expressed strong support for the objectives of the New York Declaration and the corresponding process of developing a global governance regime. With respect to the GCR, the Parliament called for the adoption of a global responsibility-sharing mechanism. In this context, it called on EU Member States to fulfil their responsibility concerning resettlement of refugees. The Parliament also expressed support for solutions aimed at strengthening the self-reliance of refugees and their integration in the host communities. It further drew attention to the need to recognise, within the GRC, the specific protection needs of women. The LIBE committee has organised follow-up [debates](#) on the topic, including with UNHCR senior officials.

## MAIN REFERENCES

European Parliament [resolution of 18 April 2018 on progress on the UN Global compacts for safe, orderly and regular migration and on refugees](#) (2018/2642(RSP)).

Aleinikoff T. A. and Martin S., [Policy Brief 6: Making the Global Compacts Work: What future for refugees and migrants?](#), April 2018.

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UNHCR, [Global trends](#), June 2017.

ICVA, [The Global compact on refugees explained: An ICVA briefing paper](#), June 2017.

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> According to a report by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC). See <https://www.afp.com/en/news/205/conflict-flight-highest-decade-monitors-doc-1501xj1>.
- <sup>2</sup> For instance, data on the Bosnian refugees who arrived in 1990s in certain EC countries reveal that their refugee situation was relatively short. At the peak of the Bosnian refugee crisis in 1996, Austria hosted 74 131, Denmark 25 598, Germany 330 000, the Netherlands 22 042, and Sweden 49 409. These European countries took a [different approach](#) in dealing with the refugees. Sweden granted them permanent residency and labour market access upon arrival. Austria, Denmark and the Netherlands granted them permanent residency and full access to their labour markets after a few years. Germany, which hosted by far the greatest number, repatriated the vast majority of them after the war ended.
- <sup>3</sup> This does not mean, however, that only 1 % of refugees have been resettled as a whole, since many are in protracted situations that last many years, while 1 % are resettled yearly.
- <sup>4</sup> For more information on this point, see Rebecca Dowd & Jane McAdam, [International cooperation and responsibility-sharing to protect refugees: what, why and how?](#), *International and Comparative Law Quarterly*, Volume 66, Issue 4, October 2017, pp. 863-892.
- <sup>5</sup> Statements on behalf of the EU delivered in October 2017: [Preparedness and rapid response; How can we expand access to resettlement?](#); [How can we address specific needs within large movements?](#); [Supporting States receiving large numbers of refugees](#).

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