NGO Statement on Coordination/ Strategic Partnerships

Agenda Item 4

Mister Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This statement is delivered on behalf of a wide range of non-governmental organizations. It has been drafted in consultation with NGOs and aims to reflect the diversity of views within the NGO community.

We would like to thank Daniel Endres for his presentation on coordination and strategic partnerships. 2014 saw a very successful UNHCR-NGO Annual Consultation, made vibrant by the theme of women’s leadership and participation and the use of social media. We saw continued good collaboration between UNHCR and NGOs on the follow-up to the High Commissioner’s dialogues on faith and on IDPs. We also appreciated the inclusion of NGOs in the new Solutions Alliance and statelessness-related efforts.

The NGO community attaches great importance to the full range of issues in the partnership update, and we would like to highlight three areas in particular.

The Structured Dialogue

First, it is important to continue to implement the High Commissioner’s decision to improve UNHCR’s partnership with the Red Cross/ Red Crescent Movement and the NGOs through the “Structured Dialogue on Partnership.” This initiative is anchored in the Principles of Partnership: equality, transparency, results-orientation, responsibility and complementarity. If fully implemented, it will result in better services for persons of concern to UNHCR.
Since this time last year, we have taken the Dialogue from the global level to the regions (through a regional dialogue in Asia) and to specific country operations (through workshops in the DRC and Pakistan). Staff who participated in these consultations were previously unfamiliar with the Dialogue, but found it relevant and helpful in coming up with context-specific recommendations for their operations.

Looking forward to the next year, we are seeking additional opportunities to provide staff on the ground with the space to discuss ways to improve partnership in their contexts. We are also keen to work with UNHCR on improving coordination and operational delivery for IDPs, promoting best practices in urban settings (including alternatives to camps), and developing a strategy for capacity strengthening. We also look forward to engaging in conversations with UNHCR in implementation of the new “Policy on Alternatives to Camps.” Finally, we encourage UNHCR staff to include NGOs in stakeholder meetings during the Country Operations Plan (COP) process as per the Dialogue’s recommendation on improved joint planning.

The Implementing Framework

As NGOs deliver over 60% of UNHCR’s operational budget on the ground, we are keenly interested in efforts underway to rollout UNHCR’s Enhanced Framework for Implementing with Partners. We hope that this Framework will result in increased transparency, predictability, and consistency across UNHCR operations, and fewer delays in signing project agreements with NGO partners. From our perspective, there are five key points to emphasize:

1. NGOs appreciate the new Project Partnership Agreement’s (PPA) explicit reference to the Principles of Partnership. Adherence to these Principles will enhance support for persons of concern to UNHCR.
2. The new PPA increases the stated responsibilities of partners. NGOs with limited capacity should be able to request and receive UNHCR support to comply with new language on investigations, data protection, sector-specific programmatic standards, etc.
3. The new PPA’s approach to instalments strives for more predictability, but at the end of the day UNHCR’s overall funding for each project is “subject the availability of funds.” This places a high degree of financial risk on NGOs, as seen recently in Lebanon.

4. UNHCR’s policy on partner personnel costs is not articulated in the new PPA. We look forward to working with UNHCR in the coming months to explore options to clarify and update UNHCR’s policy regarding international and national staff salaries. The dialogue on this important issue should include a broad number of interested international and national NGOs, and not be limited to only those who were invited by UNHCR to previous partnership meetings.

5. While UNHCR’s new guidance on partner selection, the PPA, and joint monitoring are complete or near completion, several accompanying guidance notes remain in draft. The NGO community looks forward to a consultative process to provide feedback on remaining components of the Enhanced Framework for Implementing with Partners.

The Refugee Coordination Model

Finally, NGOs are keenly interested in efforts underway to improve coordination in settings that include both refugees and other populations. In line with humanitarian principles, a person’s vulnerability (rather than category) should be the driving consideration in the international response. We support UNHCR’s and OCHA’s intention to reduce any duplication in coordination efforts (resulting in fewer coordination meetings and more delivery on the ground). We would appreciate rapid movement towards concrete decisions on which coordination mechanism is used in situations of mixed populations, including Iraq. It will be important to see the substantial commitments made in the joint April 2014 letter translated into practical improvements in coordination on the ground, regaining the momentum of the launch in April.

Copies of this statement will be made available at www.icvanetwork.org.

Thank you, Mister Chair.