

Summary of First GCR Formal Consultations (Geneva, 13-14 February 2018)

- Volker Türk's opening remarks are available here:
<http://www.unhcr.org/events/conferences/5a830070b4/first-formal-consultation-opening-remarks-volker-turk.html>
- Written contributions, including some of MS's statements will be found here:
<http://www.unhcr.org/towards-a-global-compact-on-refugees-written-contributions.html>

General comments:

- Although many states qualified the zero draft as a 'good start', overall many requests for amendments were made (on content, language, ambition rather than on format).
- Several states emphasized a need for stronger references to refugee protection frameworks, including non-*refoulement*. Many also expressed a wish to see stronger references to human rights and humanitarian law in the PoA, possibly as part of more elaborate introduction setting up the basis of the PoA.
- While a few States pointed to the morally binding nature of the Compact, most underlined that the Global Compact should be non-binding in nature.
- Several countries indicated that the first draft was a step in the right direction, albeit language needed to be strengthened and several elements remained to be further defined.
- Most host states, however, were of the opinion that the PoA was weak in calling for increased responsibility sharing, some seeing a contradiction with the provision of Art. 21 of the [latest Omnibus Resolution \(A/RES/72/150\)](#). This group of states clearly expressed disappointment, considering that the text is unbalanced, including additional commitments, burden and conditionality on them while being very vague and non-committal when it comes to contributions to be made by donors/third countries.
- In most host states' view, the draft is too much of a "menu of good intentions", from which "interested" States could pick and choose measures in support of host countries.
- Some host states expressed worries that the GCR has raised expectations that if not met could result in negative consequences for refugee responses. Host states may also push for negotiations if their perspectives are not reflected enough in future iterations of the PoA.
- Host countries and several big donor countries underlined the need for a broader support base, calling on more States to step up their engagement some clearly thinking that this would allow them to reduce their own share.
- Some states called for responsibility sharing to go beyond resources/financial mobilization to also include mobilizing political will, technical assistance, practical support (e.g. resettlement, promoting returns).
- UNHCR also considers that a main objective of the PoA is to 'widen the support base'.
- Many States emphasized the need for context-specific responses to refugee situations, respecting their own policies/sovereignty, coordination mechanisms while support should be aimed at strengthening national mechanisms.

- Others mentioned the need for a blueprint (a term also used by V. Türk) that would assist them in responding to large scale movements of refugees, thus demanding the PoA to strike a balance between adaptable responses (“no one size fits all approach”), and adding sufficient details to guide action.
- Many States underscored the importance of tackling the root causes of forced displacement (usually with a direct relation to returns) and expressed their wish to see this more strongly reflected in the PoA. Others emphasized the need to galvanize political will to prevent displacement. UNHCR, mentioned that the GCR in itself will not be able to address the root causes, but it could contribute to those processes by mobilizing early responses.
- The need for complementarity/coherence between the two compacts was raised many times, especially by Latin American countries confronted by mixed migration flows. A number of states questioned the lack of reference and attention to mixed migration in the zero draft; called for more involvement of other UN agencies in the GCR.
- More explicit references to addressing statelessness and to responding to the needs of IDPs and the relevance of climate/disaster displacement were also mentioned by a few States.
- A number of states, particularly groups of states, have not yet crystalized their positions on the zero draft and will provide more concrete positions at the next Formal Consultations.

Global Platform and Solidarity Conferences:

- The Global Platform and Solidarity Conferences were, by large, seen as good options to explore in terms of responsibility sharing, although most States expressed the need for further clarity on how these would practically work, which gaps those would address, and how those would add value to existing arrangements. Some host countries felt this was largely a repackaging of existing mechanisms, notably pledging conferences and, like them, would fail to garner sufficient support.
- Some states called for further discussions on the Platform idea (parallel discussions among member states were apparently held on the sidelines during the week).
- Some states also called for more details on the proposed asylum support group.

Additional funding:

- The need for stronger development response to refugee situations was widely welcomed, with emphasis on state ownership of development-related responses and calls for more clarity on links with the Agenda 2030.
- While the importance of both humanitarian and development assistance in responding to refugee situations resonated largely, some worried that the emphasis on development assistance could be interpreted as shifting responsibility back to the host state, if additional development funding did not materialize.
- There was also strong support to better linking humanitarian, development and peace efforts. Many also urged the GCR to reflect ongoing reforms in the international humanitarian system, particularly emphasizing the need for predictable, flexible, multi-year financing.

- The involvement of international financial institutions like the World Bank and the private sector was largely welcomed. A few countries noted that the IFIs, private sector and development actors must respect national sovereignty and undertake activities only with national consent. Algeria expressed concerns with conditionality that imposed diverting development funds to refugee-hosting areas.

Regional Organizations:

- Several States, particularly in Africa and Latin America, called for greater involvement of regional actors. Those in Latin America emphasized the need to look beyond regional organizations and take into account regional processes and mechanisms. They also called for better linkages between national, regional and global efforts to address refugee situations. Some noted, however, that regional responses should not lead to reduced global responsibility sharing.
- No intervention from IGAD (not clear if they were present) although there were interventions from the Africa Group and on behalf of African Union.

Multi-stakeholder approach:

- Several states made the case for stronger support for local actors involved in responding to refugee flows. Some others also emphasized the need for greater involvement of civil society actors in the development and implementation of the Refugee Compact and welcomed NGOs presence in the room.
- There were a few references to strengthening refugee participation in the responses although not emerging as a major point of consensus.

Data and Evidence:

- Most States acknowledged the utility of data for evidence-based programming, while a few others also pointed to the importance of adhering to international data protection standards. A few developing countries highlighted the need for support in strengthening national capacities for data collection.

Application of the CRRF:

- Latin American and Africa countries noted their positive experience in implementing the CRRF. Uganda proposed applying the CRRF at regional and local levels too. Others enquired if implementing the CRRF came with the promise of additional funding.
- In general, widespread support was expressed by States for emergency preparedness and contingency planning, even if some States demanded more precision and greater emphasis on these aspects.

Safety and security:

- The right to manage their borders and secure national safety was underlined by several States, include major donors. The need to separate refugees from combatants and fraudulent

applicants was noted as well as the need to protect national security, sovereignty and prevent 'illegal migration'.

Meeting needs

- In general, several states expressed satisfaction with the inclusion of gender, age and diversity considerations. Many of them, however, noted that these could be further mainstreamed across the text along with more emphasis on vulnerable groups including persons living with disabilities, children and women (very few mentions of elderly).
- Provision of education and economic opportunities for refugees and host communities was widely supported, with the caveat especially from host states that this should be counterbalanced with added resources, returns and resettlement. There were a few references to private sector role and to a need for more elaboration on labour standards.

Durable Solutions:

- With the exception of countries of origin, almost all States emphasized the importance of voluntary returns. They expressed concerns with the language of the draft, which, in their view, imposed obligations on them towards returnees. At the same time, they underlined the need for development assistance in support of returnees.
- In addition to voluntary returns, several host states also called for increased resettlement of refugees. Many categorically rejected local integration and considered it important to view refugees as a temporary phenomenon.
- Donors, while stressing on the need to create favourable conditions in countries of origin, voiced support for local integration. At the same time, they called on states, which have traditionally not been major resettlement destinations, to accept more refugees according to their national capacities.

Follow-up arrangements:

- There was almost unanimous support for the need to develop stronger indicators in order to monitor/measure progress towards the implementation of the global compact on refugees. But while pledges remain voluntary, UNHCR noted that a formula would have to be found to balance it with the need for concrete action.
- Hosts states called for a mechanism to ensure they get tangible and countable support.
- Most States noted that reporting requirements needed to be light, and that such measures were ideally linked to existing reporting mechanisms such as the SDGs.
- UNHCR's proposal to establish a digital platform to share best practices was widely endorsed. Some, however, noted that a digital platform may not be ideal as a strong digital gap still exist, so alternative ways to share may also need to be considered.
- There were some references to the need to also include stronger references to accountability in the PoA.