

**Opening NGO Statement**  
**2006 Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement**  
*Presented by Thomas Horne, NGO Focal Point*

Dear Colleagues of the Annual Tripartite Consultations:

On behalf of the NGO network, the Norwegian Refugee Council would like to thank the Norwegian Chair and UNHCR for their collaboration in planning this year's Tripartite meeting.

Let me begin by welcoming the restructuring of the Resettlement Section into the Resettlement Service under the Division of International Protection Services and the appointment of Vincent Cochetel as Head. We are grateful for this increased stature. We feel that with this prominence now afforded to resettlement, a more robust approach towards utilizing NGOs in the resettlement process is in place.

As we look to the future, we see a clear role for NGOs to complement UNHCR's capacity to use resettlement as a tool for international protection. This would address concerns regarding gaps between projected resettlement needs and actual capacity to identify and process refugees for resettlement.

A good step in this direction was the UNHCR-NGO Workshop on Resettlement held in Washington DC in March 2005. We look forward to more concrete steps to translate the results of this consultation into workable programs, such as the ICMC administered deployment scheme. Similarly, we would welcome a discussion with UNHCR and States to enhance the role of European NGOs in the resettlement process.

We welcome recent moves by some European countries to increase their annual resettlement quotas and their ad hoc resettlement activities. However, we would like to express our disappointment at the overall lack of progress in the European Union. Despite the commitment to a joint resettlement programme in the EU's agenda for 2005-2010, no agreement has been reached by the Council of Ministers to establish such a scheme.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss the protection and resettlement needs of refugees living with HIV/AIDS who are often particularly vulnerable. Treatment regimes have improved and most resettlement countries have excellent medical support for persons living with HIV/AIDS. Their condition should no longer pose a barrier to resettlement.

As stated in consecutive years, we reiterate the need of family reunification to make resettlement a durable and dignified solution. Additionally, successful integration is dependent upon refugees gaining a sense of *belonging* within their new society - leading to full social and economic participation. The importance of welcoming and accepting "*receiving communities*" cannot be over-stated. It is in the best interests of *all parties* to ensure that refugee resettlement programmes are appropriately resourced, by involving public education, community participation, and positive media outreach.

We urge States to resettle refugees in a manner that preserves the integrity of the 1951 Convention, without applying criteria to determination systems, such as integration potential, negative domestic sentiment and security concerns that are inconsistent with international refugee and human rights law.

I appreciate this opportunity to offer these views from the NGO community, hoping that through dialogue and consultation we can strengthen the partnership between the NGOs, UNHCR and States in strengthening resettlement as a solution for more of the world's most vulnerable refugees.

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