

**UNHCR Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement  
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**UNHCR-NGO Partnerships:  
Expanding and Enhancing Resettlement Capacity**

***Remarks by:***

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***Presented by:***

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Dear Distinguished Participants of the Annual Tripartite Consultations:

I have been asked to provide you with some information from the NGO perspective (specifically from the perspective of the Refugee Council USA) about some very hopeful discussions and working sessions between the UNHCR Resettlement Unit and NGOs from Canada, Australia, Denmark, and the United States designed to strengthen UNHCR's capacity to facilitate resettlement.

I must begin by expressing appreciation to Eva Dumont and her colleagues in the UNHCR Resettlement Unit for their leadership, critical and creative thinking, and cooperative attitudes. In all of our discussions over the past year, especially during the working session March 23 and 24, 2005, in Washington, D.C., it was abundantly clear that the UNHCR staff's primary focus and concern has been on improving conditions for refugees.

The title chosen for the March 23 and 24 working session was *Strengthening Partnerships: Enhancing the Role of NGOs in the Resettlement Process*. The context within which this discussion took place included several important considerations: (1) a growing population of refugees around the world without access to durable solutions; (2) an underutilization of resettlement opportunities provided by resettlement countries; and (3) an interest on the part of NGOs to become more operationally involved in the identification and processing of refugees in need of resettlement.

From the perspective of the Refugee Council USA, there are several areas that hold great potential for enhancing NGO involvement in the resettlement process. These include such areas as:

- Assisting with registration (including outside of the resettlement context);
- Identifying, referring, and processing refugees in need of resettlement;
- Training UNHCR field staff and implementing partners in resettlement-related matters; and
- Providing child welfare services, including conducting *Best Interests Determinations* (including outside of the resettlement context).

I am pleased with the comprehensiveness of the report from the March 23 and 24 working session and commend this report for your careful consideration. You will find many creative and practical ideas for enhancing resettlement opportunities through greater utilization of NGOs. For my part, I wish to highlight two general themes that emerged from these discussions.

First, there was consensus that the ICMC-administered deployment program, with some adaptation, provides a useful vehicle for expanding NGO engagement in resettlement efforts. It was recognized, though, that to do this, modifications to the current program would be necessary. Some of the specific recommendations for adapting the deployment program to achieve the desired results included:

- Better dissemination of information about this resource and encouragement to utilize it within UNHCR;
- More resources applied to the program in order to expand NGO involvement;
- Less restrictive and more tailored criteria for candidate acceptance for deployment assignments; and
- Expanding and adapting the ICMC contract in order to facilitate and finance targeted NGO involvement in projects that may not now be possible within existing structure of the deployment program.

Second, there was a recognition on the part of the participants in the March working session that while the ICMC deployment program could be adapted to enhance NGO involvement, other mechanisms would be necessary. Therefore, there were calls for creating new mechanisms for contracting with NGOs or consortia of NGOs to operationalize resettlement efforts in targeted regions and activities.

We in the Refugee Council USA, as I am sure is the case of NGOs in other resettlement countries, stand ready and anxious to pursue these ideas with the UNHCR.

The March working session also took a very practical view toward these proposals and recognized that we face some significant challenges in moving forward with these ideas. The report of the working session contains a number of these challenges, but I would like to highlight two in particular for your consideration.

- Though UNHCR leadership has made the expansion of resettlement a priority, there is an uneven commitment to resettlement at different levels and areas within UNHCR;
- Existing decision-making and funding mechanisms are not conducive to enhancing NGO involvement in resettlement.

I encourage UNHCR and the resettlement countries to commit to expanding NGO involvement in resettlement efforts and to establish specific plans for accomplishing this. The NGO community is prepared to engage in such planning with you.

In closing, allow me to repeat our gratitude to Eva and her colleagues in the Resettlement Unit for their efforts. I wish to thank, as well, the resettlement countries for their commitment to aggressively pursuing durable solutions for refugees and for their support to the UNHCR to enhance resettlement opportunities.

The UNHCR has made significant strides in recent years in the area of strengthening resettlement. My hope is that with more creative and proactive use of the NGO community in these efforts a greater number of refugees will have a chance at rebuilding their shattered lives. By so doing, the international community will be making resettlement a greater tool of protection and an alternative to protracted stays in refugee camps, and this should be a priority that we all embrace.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to your discussions.