

# **UNHCR Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement Geneva, June 14-15, 2005**

## **NGO Opening Statement**

*Presented by:*

Mette Honore, Danish Refugee Council

Good morning colleagues,

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

As you see from the agenda the aim for this year's consultations is to create an interactive forum for partners in resettlement. We therefore have three workshops which, this year, focus on integration issues. Participants include practitioners from a receiving municipality and a voluntary network. Most importantly we will also hear from a refugee telling his own story of resettlement to Denmark. The NGOs appreciate the emphasis placed on the role of volunteers as one important component of resettlement and integration activities. We look forward to the workshops and the outcomes that will emerge.

In view of the discussions at the EU level exploring how European countries can increase their involvement in resettlement, we welcome the inclusion of the perspective of European NGOs in this year's ATC agenda.

We strongly encourage UNHCR to continue to prioritise resettlement as an important component of international protection. To facilitate this we support elevating the position of the resettlement chief to a deputy director level or higher as previously articulated at EXCOM.

Reading the Global Needs report 2006 we note the particularly acute shortfall between refugees in need of resettlement and UNHCR offices' capacity to refer them. The five country offices who state they can only achieve less than one third of their resettlement caseloads account for one quarter of the entire caseload in Africa, representing 7,050 refugees in need of resettlement having to remain in precarious situations.

NGOs fully support the importance of voluntary repatriation as a critical tool in international protection. However, we also caution UNHCR against overlooking the importance of resettlement during voluntary repatriation campaigns such as those relating to Liberian, Sudanese and Somali refugees.

As one excellent example of the benefits derived from genuine tripartite initiatives, NGOs would like to highlight the success of the UNHCR/ICMC deployment scheme as one vehicle for increasing capacity. In 2004 the deployment scheme deployed 62 people to 35 field offices. This generated more than 14,000 individual referrals of refugees in need of resettlement and assisted in the verification of more than 19,000 in group submissions to 11 countries. This is an excellent outcome by any standard.

While NGOs appreciate the desire for the tripartite processes to be genuine and collaborative, we believe that this needs further improvement. To maximise the potential of the tripartite relationships to be effective NGOs must be included wherever possible in the decisions about ATC processes. For example, NGOs would appreciate receiving the minutes of Working Group meetings and being consulted about issues such as the finalisation of chapter 7 of the Resettlement Handbook on Group Processing Methodology.

Further, NGOs believe that chapter 4.9 of the Resettlement Handbook should be re-examined in light of the need to resolve protracted refugee situations which have resulted in large numbers of refugees being warehoused around the world.

Dialogue and co-operation in a Tripartite spirit, framed with respect and openness among the three operators in the resettlement work, ought to be strengthened in order to counteract this tendency - which we fear could jeopardize the resettlement work.

We are looking forward to these two days and hope to have constructive and beneficial discussions of the subjects.

Thank you.