

## GLOBAL REPRESENTATIVES MEETING 14-16 MAY 2018

### OVERVIEW REPORT: TEN TAKEAWAYS FROM THE 2018 GRM

The 2018 GRM aimed to generate an exchange on the changing global context in which UNHCR is operating, building on the Strategic Directions 2017-2021 and projecting ourselves forward to explore what we expect the world to look like in ten years' time. How could we function together, better, to secure protection and solutions in this evolving global context? How is UNHCR's role changing and what should we be doing now – over the next 2-3 years – to ensure that we are 'fit for the future' and able to deliver what is needed of us?

The majority of sessions were held in plenary, and covered a range of topics including UNHCR's institutional identity and role at global and country levels; accountability and values, with a particular focus on sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment; organisational design and regionalisation; emergency preparedness and response, internal displacement; and protection advocacy and communications. Reports of all sessions, including suggested follow up actions by Headquarters and Representatives, are now available.

This overview report does not seek to capture the entirety of the three days of discussions, but rather to capture some over-arching 'takeaways' that senior managers, Representatives and other UNHCR colleagues are invited to reflect on and take forward.

1. This is a moment to reset. The Global Compact on Refugees and the new approaches that it embodies could be as transformative as the 1951 Convention. It is our responsibility to bring it to life. We must continue to engage and steer its development, but this also means a hard look at ourselves, and in some respects, going back to basics. UNHCR should be a catalyst that informs, engages, and mobilises all those individuals, entities and resources that have the power to bring about protection and solutions for refugees, internally displaced and stateless people. We must have clarity of purpose – at Headquarters, regional and field levels, and be ready to adapt to new dynamics and opportunities.
2. The comprehensive response model is paving the way for a more expansive way of working. The CRRF gives concrete expression to humanitarian-development cooperation and is in line with broader trends within the UN system and beyond. It presents huge opportunities for refugees (and potentially for those internally displaced and stateless) but we need to adapt to pursue these – in our ways of working, our systems, our corporate profile and skill set, in the relationships we pursue and in how we engage across governments. The next 2-3 years will be a crunch period, as the key elements of the model are embedded across our operations, and as the impact of development investments and legislative and policy changes start to be felt. Working with our partners to accelerate these results, and to demonstrate the added value and additional resources that it brings – as well as the protection dividends – will be essential. Engagement with the private sector, municipalities and others must become part of our core way of working. Local politicians are important interlocutors; we should be a bridge between refugees and politics. Investments in collecting, analysing and sharing data - including through the joint UNHCR-World Bank centre now being established, will also be key.
3. UNHCR can be inward-looking. We need to relax, breathe and make space for others. UN Reform, in particular, is an opportunity – to build alliances, embed refugees, internal displacement and statelessness

in broader collective efforts, and build closer links between the humanitarian, development, peace and security pillars of the system. There is a new spirit in the UN; we should be a strong partner in the Secretary-General's reform efforts. Of course, tensions will emerge; safeguards will be needed, and sometimes, difficult to maintain. Close interaction between the field and Headquarters, including the New York Office, will be important as the reforms take effect. More broadly, while certain partnerships can be difficult, especially where issues related to mandate are involved, experience has shown that over time these can be largely overcome. Clarity on our own role and contribution in each situation, and the ability to communicate that to others, is crucial.

4. Protection – and its relationship to solutions – must remain at the heart of our work. This means excellence in protection delivery - including on core issues such as SGBV and ensuring that programmes are driven by well-defined protection strategies shaped by age, gender and diversity considerations. It is also our key contribution to broader collective efforts – whether by shaping the protection strategies of humanitarian country teams, providing protection analysis and guidance in response to specific contextual challenges, helping forge ‘concepts of operations’ for the protection of civilians in conflict settings, or providing the protection notes which help shape the engagement of the World Bank and other development actors. Our field presence and proximity to displaced and stateless people is critical to informing and shaping these contributions. Protection advocacy is also a vital part of our work, for which we have significant institutional assets, but these are not always used to best effect. We need to better understand and leverage the role of advocacy, including communications, in influencing behaviour, and approach it not as an activity done on the side, but a core competency that forms part of our organisational DNA.
5. Our ‘comparative advantage’ - lies not only in our mandate, but in how we deliver on it – especially in emergencies. Our preparedness capacity, and our ability to respond quickly and effectively in emergencies must be sustained and enhanced - this is the point in the displacement cycle in which protection risks are often most acute, and lives depend on our agility and ability to respond. This means more investment in early identification of risks, concrete preparedness actions together with local authorities and other partners, and ringing alarm bells in time. Representatives should feel empowered to draw on the resources made available to them through the new Emergency Policy and should exercise decisive leadership acting on a “do no harm” and “no regrets” basis. This means to proactively and early on assume the responsibilities that rest with us in refugee operations, as protection agency and under the cluster approach. Putting in place adapted, and if necessary, innovative mechanisms to ensure duty of care, in particular for national colleagues, as well as the Representatives’ accountability for prevention of and response to SEA/SHA are integral part of any emergency response. The CRRF will increasingly provide a platform for mobilising coalitions of support and early orientations towards resilience and solutions, but a rapid, protection-driven humanitarian response will remain critical for UNHCR.
6. In mixed migration flows, protection delivery means operational engagement. The updated ten-point plan remains an effective resource but must be applied and made meaningful through creative engagement based on strengthened data collection and analysis - the latter backed up by a corporate strategy and tools. We need to work towards more predictable coordination structures, while bearing in mind that where cross-border movements are overwhelmingly driven by refugee-related reasons, they should not be described as 'mixed' or approached through a migration lens. We should strengthen prevention, in particular mass information tools, and response capacities in relation to trafficking in persons.
7. Despite important progress, our engagement with IDPs remains inconsistent and needs attention. Investing in protection and solutions for IDPs is closely linked to finding solutions for refugees. The lack of clear parameters for our operational response, and unclear accountabilities risk reputational damage unrealistic expectations by partners, and poor perceptions by donors. We must achieve a more decisive, predictable and systematic engagement to secure protection outcomes, meet gaps in response, leverage

solutions even where political solutions are not yet in place, and work towards responsible disengagement. We must invest more in preparedness, early engagement and continuity in key cluster coordination and data management capacities, and ensure that our interventions are fully linked to collective inter-agency strategies.

8. Our commitment to integrity and values must be lived, not just spoken. This means a hard look at the power dynamics within our organisation, and in our relationships with displaced and stateless people, and others. Values such as tolerance, respect, diversity and inclusion must be translated into our organisational culture and our own attitudes and behaviours. Too often, authority is exercised as power over others, and through archaic structures that enable exploitation, abuse and harassment to emerge and go unchecked. Without innovation, participation and diversity, we are condemned to stagnation, and soon, irrelevance. We must create space for uncomfortable conversations, especially around sexual exploitation and abuse, and sexual harassment, and the dynamics within our organisation that give rise to these. 'Zero tolerance' is a responsibility that must be collectively, and urgently, pursued.
9. The risk of fraud and misuse of resources in our operations is growing, and presents an existential threat. Our operations in insecure, high-risk environments, and our overall budget and programmes have increased significantly in recent years. With increased resources come increased expectations with regard to integrity and accountability, especially from donors. If they perceive a lack of transparency, they will act quickly and strongly, with consequences for our institutional reputation and funding, and most importantly for the protection and well-being of displaced and stateless people. They want strong governance systems, rapid lessons learned, robust disciplinary measures and clear accountability; and we have to deliver. Here, the Representative's role is critical - in exercising vigilance, in assessing and addressing risks, and in quickly escalating concerns. Risk Management 2.0 will significantly boost our ability to identify risk and prevent fraud and other misconduct, but Representatives are accountable for the resources entrusted to them and must assume responsibility accordingly. Headquarters must also work to ensure that operations have the resources and expertise they need to ensure sufficient controls.
10. On regionalisation, it is not a matter of 'if' but 'how'. In the next stage of our change process, UNHCR will move towards a decentralised model in the course of 2019. The aim is to strengthen and empower the field, and move authority and resources closer to the point of delivery. We need to find the right balance between strong field operations, strong regional entities to provide management, support and oversight, and a strong centre to set directions, drive policy and pursue external engagement at the institutional/global level. Past experience shows that the institutional commitment and political will to sustain this effort, and backing up decentralised structures with the transfer of resources and decision-making authority, will be critical. Delegation of authority should not stop at the country level, but must also move to field offices. We need to find the right balance between a core design and flexibility - no one wants a 'one size fits all' approach, but coherence is also key. Rotation and mobility - including of senior managers - will remain important. . UNHCR's institutional culture – how we interact and work with one another– is a key underlying factor that will ultimately determine the success of our collective efforts to transform the way we work. If these efforts are to achieve the impact we want - in terms of more flexible, responsive operations, then they must be accompanied by a major, corporate commitment to simplifying and streamlining process. While some steps have been taken, these have failed to meaningfully tackle the problem, and a major effort is now needed.

25 May 2018