

Draft concept note on Support Platforms: conceptualization and operationalization

Table des matières

1. <i>Support Platforms as set out in the global compact on refugees and role of UNHCR</i>	2
ANNEX: RELEVANT PROVISIONS OF THE GLOBAL COMPACT ON REFUGEES	8

1. Support Platforms as set out in the global compact on refugees and role of UNHCR

Provisions for Support Platforms in GCR, circumstances appropriate for activation, structure and working methods, composition.

Guidance for Bureaux and country operations

Executive summary

The purpose of this note is to give general guidance on the ‘Support Platforms’ envisaged in the global compact on refugees. It addresses their potential benefits, circumstances in which they could be used, their composition, possible structures and working methods, processes for activation, and UNHCR’s role. It is a living document that will be enriched and further elaborated on the basis of ongoing and upcoming discussions with Bureaux.

This guidance is generic in nature and is designed to give Bureaux and country operations a clearer understanding of what a Support Platform is and how it might assist in operationalizing GCR. Interested Bureaux and country operations can contact the Division of Resilience and Solutions for situation-specific guidance and support.

The [global compact on refugees](#) (GCR) proposes that, in appropriate circumstances, UNHCR would be able to ‘activate’ a Support Platform to provide context-specific support (the relevant provisions are reproduced in Annex I.). The Support Platform is, in effect, a flexible modality for the provision of situation-specific support from the international community. The compact notes two criteria for its activation:

- a large-scale and/or complex refugee situation where the response capacity of a host State is or is expected to be overwhelmed; or
- a protracted refugee situation where the host State(s) requires considerable additional support, and/or a major opportunity for a solution arises (e.g. large-scale voluntary repatriation to the country of origin or a comprehensive solution to responsibly end a specific situation).

A Support Platform would be led by a group of States that are committed to providing support, and would benefit from the engagement of other stakeholders as appropriate (including regional and subregional mechanisms and groupings, international organizations, international financial institutions, civil society, and the private sector). The functions of a Support Platform would include:

- galvanizing political commitment and advocacy for prevention, protection, response and solutions;
- mobilizing financial, material and technical assistance, as well as resettlement and complementary pathways for admission to third countries;
- facilitating coherent humanitarian and development responses, including through the early and sustained engagement of development actors; and

- supporting comprehensive policy initiatives to ease pressure on host countries, build resilience and self-reliance, and find solutions.

The global compact leaves considerable room for maneuver when it comes to many of the specifics of how the Support Platforms would be composed and operate, meaning that each Support Platform can be structured and can operate in a manner best suited to the situation at hand.

UNHCR's internal 'work streams matrix' for the implementation of the global compact provides that Bureaux will lead UNHCR's engagement in setting up and supporting Support Platforms, with DRS providing advice and support.

Potential benefits of a Support Platform

In appropriate circumstances, it is envisaged that the activation of a Support Platform would:

- Focus the attention of the international community (and, in particular, those States, regional institutions and other stakeholders that are best placed to make a real difference) on the refugee situation concerned, and the contribution that they can make towards its alleviation (as a complement to and in support of UNHCR's work);
- Engage the collective leverage of a group of key players—including at the diplomatic level—to generate momentum and buy-in for a comprehensive, whole-of-society, international response, with the advice and assistance of UNHCR;
- Facilitate the coordination and harmonization of bilateral efforts (which may otherwise diverge) in support of the international response, as well as ongoing monitoring of its implementation;
- Create avenues for linking humanitarian assistance with longer term development efforts both within and beyond the UN system;
- Assist the host States in highlighting the situation and assisting them through different mechanisms, including resource mobilisation efforts or other efforts at responsibility and burden sharing; and
- Provide an ongoing process for sustained engagement in the international response, the exploration of further ideas and opportunities, and to address any concerns that may arise.

Circumstances appropriate for the activation of a Support Platform

The global compact on refugees provides for the activation of a Support Platform in the following circumstances:

- a large-scale and/or complex refugee situation where the response capacity of a host State is or is expected to be overwhelmed; or
- a protracted refugee situation where the host State(s) requires considerable additional support, and/or a major opportunity for a solution arises (e.g. large-scale voluntary

repatriation to the country of origin or a comprehensive solution to responsibly end a specific situation).

The presence of these criteria are not envisaged to lead automatically to the activation of a Support Platform; a wider range of factors would also need to be considered, such as the adequacy of the existing national and international response, the nature of the protection environment, opportunities to achieve advances in protection and solutions outcomes, and political factors that may assist or hinder the operation of a Support Platform.

Composition

The global compact on refugees makes it clear that Support Platforms are to be State-led:

Each Support Platform would benefit from the leadership and engagement of a group of States to mobilize contributions and support. The composition of this group would be specific to the context.

Whilst the global compact on refugees does not specifically address the question, the fact that a Support Platform would be activated by UNHCR suggests that UNHCR would have a role in identifying the States that are to become Platform participants. As a practical matter, of course, the host countries/country of origin from whom the Support Platform was being activated would need to agree on the Platform's composition, and each participating State would also need to agree to participate.

Ideally, the participants in a Support Platform would be a coalition of States that:

- Have a certain degree of constructive influence in the country/countries concerned;
- Have a common vision, consistent with the global compact on refugees, about the kind of international response that is needed; and
- Are committed to work together to towards that kind of international response, including through the deployment of diplomatic, financial and other resources.

Identifying appropriate participating States or regional institutions would require rigorous political assessment. The following could be considered:

- States in the region, so as to foster a sense of regional solidarity;
- Relevant regional institutions
- Resettlement States;
- Trading partners;
- States with particular historical or political links, or other 'soft' influence.

In order to ensure efficacy, it would be important to keep the size of each Platform manageable. The ideal size of a Platform would depend on the circumstances. In order to prevent the size of the steering committee becoming too large, certain participating States (such as donors) could be asked to participate as representatives of the wider category to which they belong, and asked to brief and consult with others where appropriate.

The global compact on refugees gives other stakeholders a role in the Support Platforms (they 'would be invited to engage as appropriate'), and they are likely to be important players in some contexts. Other stakeholders that could be invited to engage in the work of a Support Platform in appropriate circumstances include:

- Relevant regional organizations, particularly those with strong convening power;
- International organizations that are participating in the response or that could be of assistance;
- The Resident Coordinator and/or the Secretary-General's Special Representative/Special Envoy (where applicable);
- Major international and national NGOs that are participating in the response;
- Companies with large operations in the host countries and/or countries of origin that have the potential to be of particular assistance (including through possible operational or investment work);¹
- Relevant chambers of commerce, as representatives of the business community more generally;
- Academic institutions, think tanks or experts;
- Representatives of host communities; and
- Representatives of refugee communities.

Structures and working methods

The global compact leaves considerable room for manoeuvre when it comes to the specifics of how Support Platforms would be structured and would operate, meaning that each Support Platform can be tailored in a manner best suited to the situation at hand.

Given that Support Platforms are to be State-led, the question of structure and working methods would be a question for the States participating, though UNHCR's assistance role (discussed further below) could extend to providing advice on this question.

The appropriate structure and working methods would depend on the situation at hand and the specific objectives of the Support Platform. For example:

- In the case of a low-income host country dealing with a large influx of refugees fleeing armed conflict, a Support Platform could be activated to boost humanitarian support, engage development actors to support hosting areas and advocate for international efforts to bring the conflict to an end. A number of 'pillars' of activity could be identified to help achieve these objectives, with one or more participating States being asked to lead each pillar.² The Support Platform could meet regularly to discuss progress made in each pillar, the next steps that the leading State(s) have in mind for each pillar, and the ways in which the pillars could support one another. The Support Platform could also serve as an entry point for the broader international community to demonstrate solidarity with and support for the countries of asylum. The Platform could also discuss, more broadly, strategies that could be employed by the international community to address ongoing challenges.

¹ IFC has been identified as being in a good position to assist with this.

² The Solidarity Approach for the People of Rakhine State, for example, identifies the following six pillars: refugee and statelessness solutions; humanitarian assistance; development financing; migration management; trade and investment; and environmental management.

- In the case of a regional situation with people seeking asylum in a number of middle-income countries, the Support Platform could be used, in addition to the above mentioned, to make additional financing available on concessional terms³ including for preventive efforts, for example through IBRD, and to encourage private sector investment.
- In the case of a country of origin, a Support Platform could be used to bring attention to unaddressed root causes, solutions for IDPs and reintegration. It could bring together key actors to engage in a concerted effort to address these ongoing issues. With the inclusion of States wishing to return people to the country of origin in question, the Support Platform could also be an important site of advocacy for UNHCR.
- In the case of complex/mixed flows of forcibly displaced people involving different groups in need of international protection, within and across national borders, the Support Platform can facilitate coherence and complementarity of responsibility- and burden-sharing mechanisms across countries of origin, countries of transit and countries of asylum and/or return.

UNHCR could also advise on:

- The regularity with which the Support Platform would meet;
- Appropriate representation for States and other stakeholders;
- The topics for discussion at meetings (including, potentially, progress made in implementing the comprehensive plan, further support that is required from the international community to ensure its full implementation, and progress made towards solutions);
- The appropriateness of developing a situation-specific ‘compact’ and the matters that could be addressed by such a compact;
- The appropriateness of organizing a solidarity conference, as well as possible modalities for such a conference;⁴ and
- The appropriateness of establishing a resettlement core group for the situation.
- The monitoring and reporting requirements in order to provide a common accountability framework to stakeholders involved.

Activation

The global compact on refugees provides that a Support Platform could be activated by UNHCR (a) upon the request of concerned host countries or countries of origin, where appropriate, and (b) in close consultation with relevant States that have committed to contributing in

³ The Global Concessional Financing Facility (GCFF) launched in 2016 has expanded to the global level, enabling it to provide rapid support to MICs facing refugee crises wherever they occur.

⁴ See GCR, [27].

principle, taking into account existing response efforts and political, peacekeeping and peacebuilding initiatives. This suggests a process for activation along the following lines:

1. UNHCR receives a request for a Support Platform from one or more host countries or countries of origin. (UNHCR could also encourage a country to make such a request, in appropriate circumstances.)
2. The relevant Bureau (as the internal lead, in accordance with the agreed global compact workstreams) conducts an internal assessment of the appropriateness of a Support Platform, as well as an examination of possible composition, structure and working methods. This would involve input from across the organization, including the relevant country office(s), DRS, DIP, DER, DPSM, and DESS.
3. If the internal assessment indicates that a Support Platform would be appropriate, UNHCR then consults with relevant States to ascertain their views.
4. If the consultation also indicates that a Support Platform would be appropriate, the High Commissioner would receive a report of Steps 1-3 above, a recommendation that a Support Platform be activated, and a recommendation as to the Platform's composition.
5. The High Commissioner activates the Support Platform and invites relevant States and other stakeholders to participate in its work.

UNHCR's role

The global compact on refugees provides that each Support Platform will be 'assisted by UNHCR'. This is envisaged to involve both secretariat-type, advisory and other functions which can be relevant to the context.

Such a role provides UNHCR with an important opportunity to advance its protection and solutions mandate: UNHCR would have an important role in providing information, analysis and recommendations to Support Platforms concerning the protection environment in host States, the conditions in countries of origin, and opportunities to enhance protection and pursue durable solutions. UNHCR would also be in a position to advise on the work of the Support Platform so as to ensure that they are being carried out in a manner that advances protection and solutions.

In accordance with the agreed global compact workstreams, the relevant regional Bureau would lead UNHCR's engagement with a Support Platform, with DRS playing an advisory and supporting role and ensuring, as appropriate, a degree of consistency with other potential Platforms (including to ensure the exchange of good practices and lessons learned).

ANNEX: RELEVANT PROVISIONS OF THE GLOBAL COMPACT ON REFUGEES

2.2 Support Platform

22. In support of national arrangements, host countries would be able to seek the activation of a Support Platform.
23. The Support Platform would enable context-specific support for refugees and concerned host countries and communities. In a spirit of partnership and in line with host country ownership and leadership, its functions would include:
 - galvanizing political commitment and advocacy for prevention, protection, response and solutions;
 - mobilizing financial, material and technical assistance, as well as resettlement and complementary pathways for admission to third countries, in support of the comprehensive plan (para 21), where applicable, drawing on Global Refugee Forum pledges;
 - facilitating coherent humanitarian and development responses, including through the early and sustained engagement of development actors in support of host communities and refugees; and
 - supporting comprehensive policy initiatives to ease pressure on host countries, build resilience and self-reliance, and find solutions.
24. Upon the request of concerned host countries or countries of origin, where appropriate, a Support Platform could be activated/deactivated and assisted by UNHCR, in close consultation with relevant States that have committed to contributing in principle, taking into account existing response efforts and political, peacekeeping and peacebuilding initiatives. Criteria for activation would include:
 - a large-scale and/or complex refugee situation where the response capacity of a host State is or is expected to be overwhelmed; or
 - a protracted refugee situation where the host State(s) requires considerable additional support, and/or a major opportunity for a solution arises (e.g. large-scale voluntary repatriation to the country of origin).
25. Each Support Platform would benefit from the leadership and engagement of a group of States to mobilize contributions and support, which may take different forms (para 23). The composition of this group would be specific to the context. Other relevant stakeholders would be invited to engage as appropriate.
26. Support Platforms would not be fixed bodies or undertake operational activities. They would draw on pre-announced expressions of interest (including at the Global Refugee Forum) and standby arrangements. They would complement and interact with existing coordination mechanisms for humanitarian and development cooperation. In consultation with participating States, UNHCR would ensure regular reporting on the work of the Support Platforms to its Executive Committee, the United Nations General Assembly and the Global Refugee Forums, including to facilitate exchange of information, practices and experiences between different platforms.
27. The strategy for support by a Platform could draw on a wide range of options. It could initiate a solidarity conference to generate support for the comprehensive plan, where this would add value and not duplicate other processes, bearing in mind the call for humanitarian assistance to be flexible, multi-year and unearmarked in line with para 32 below. A solidarity conference would be situation-specific, providing a strategic vehicle to garner broad-based support for host States or countries of origin, encompassing States, development actors, civil society, local communities and the private sector, and seeking financial, material and technical contributions, as well as resettlement and complementary pathways for admission.

Support Platforms are also mentioned Paragraphs 29 and 86.