

Comments on the revised version of the draft Declaration (v. 12 July 2016) - Switzerland

First we would like to thank the co-facilitators and their teams for their hard work on the revised draft of the Political Declaration.

Forced displacement

We are deeply concerned that several important references to forced displacement and displaced persons have been deleted in the current version. This does not reflect the reality with more than 40mio people internally displaced and many more uprooted by factors that are not covered by the 1951 Geneva Convention but still needing protection. We would therefore suggest revisiting the text and reintegrating the references to forced displacement and notably IDPs.

Prevention

We welcome the improved language in some of the commitments with regard to preventing forced displacement. Considering however, that even the best protection system for displaced persons is not as good as preventing displacement in the first place, prevention should be recognized as a pinnacle element of the Declaration. We would therefore suggest that a paragraph is added in the first part of the declaration. Also, as we have stated previously it is very important to us to include a strong reference to the fact that International Humanitarian Law protects civilians in times of armed conflict and its violations constitute a root cause of displacement. We thank Liechtenstein for making a concrete proposal.

Multi-stakeholder

We all agree that the primary responsibility of addressing large movements of refugees and migrants lies with governments. The reality on ground shows however that in addition to international organizations, thousands of civil society organizations, trade unions, migrants and refugee organizations and the diaspora, are doing phenomenal work for migrants, refugees and displaced persons on a daily basis and often in difficult circumstances.

We also have to acknowledge, that the private sector is increasingly playing an important role, beyond philanthropy. It creates jobs, fosters investment, contributes to the sharing of knowledge but also has a responsibility to uphold a principled approach to doing business.

Based in the above we would suggest to the review the text and identify references to the work and possible partnerships with the above mentioned actors as well as to the importance of including them in all relevant process to be added in the Declaration.

Furthermore we should include in the first part of the Declaration a new paragraph on multi-stakeholder partnership and alliances as a fundamental principle in addressing large movements of refugees and migrants. Multi-stakeholder alliances in other areas such as the Health Sector through the Global Fund or the Global Alliance on Vaccines have shown interesting results.

Humanitarian – Development Gap

Some references have been included in the current version regarding overcoming the humanitarian – development gap. It is essential that we take clear commitments to work towards a more coordinated and coherent approach. There are ample references to be used in the Agenda for Humanity and the Commitments made at the WHS. We should also consider referencing the Grand Bargain.

The Declaration should as a minimum include a commitment to further coherence between humanitarian and development actors, notably through joint context analysis, joint strategic planning, as well as close operational cooperation, based on comparative advantage of different actors to achieve collective outcomes on country or regional level on country or regional level when addressing situations of forced displacement. These collective outcomes should be followed with collective results-based funding instruments. To this effect, the planning cycles of UNDAFs and humanitarian Strategic Response Plans should be aligned.

Having said this we also need to acknowledge the primacy of humanitarian principles to continue to underpin humanitarian action as well as agree to uphold the principles on aid effectiveness.

MICIC/Nansen

We would like to echo the Philippines in thanking you for the references to the guidelines, MICIC and Nansen. And we would also like to reiterate our strong support for this inclusion. We would however suggest that when referring to migrants in countries experiencing conflicts or natural disasters we suggest to not only refer to “assistance”, but also “protection”

Additional remarks – on precision of language

When referring to refugee admission policies we should refer to international law and not just “rights”

When referring to return we would like to see the addition of due process and the principle of non-refoulement

With the references to conflict we suggest to be precise and use the term “armed conflict and other situations of violence”

Similar to what the EU has said we would urge the co-facilitators to refrain from using the word “burden” when talking about refugees and displaced persons. People are not a “burden” - displaced persons are our shared responsibility and the UN Summit is intended to ensure that this responsibility is better shared not by proximity but by our common commitments of responsibility sharing and international cooperation.

The Declaration should give more recognition to social inclusion being an essential factor to self-reliance. Social inclusion should include access to language training, legal information, cultural orientation, education, health care and justice.

When we talk about access to the labor market we should ensure that this includes referencing the principles of Decent Work.

When we specifically address women in the declaration we should recognize that women are not inherently vulnerable – unlike children, who are vulnerable because of their age. They are however often victims of gender-based discrimination and we should therefore reaffirm the commitment to protect the rights of refugee and migrant women and girls from abuses and exploitation. We should also recognize the contribution of women migrants to sustainable development.

We would also support the proposal made by the EU last week to give a stronger focus to youth and the need to create opportunities for growth, employment and education.

Thank you.