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Policy two-pager

**UNHCR 30 March 2016 high-level meeting
on global responsibility sharing through pathways for admission of Syrian refugees**

ICMC goals and advocacy

*To respond to Syrian refugees and their families forced by war to run for their lives;
to comply with obligations under international law that governments wrote for themselves after war had turned millions of Europeans into refugees;
to end trauma and trafficking that skyrocket when dangerous migration is the only way to seek safety;
to say “no more deaths!” crossing waters and borders;
to bring order to chaos, defueling exploitation, xenophobia, and social violence;
to step up together to challenges we have seen and solved before:*

I. What is needed is *solution*-sharing, not just responsibility-sharing. Solutions must:

[1] be global, not just regional;

[2] involve not only states and agencies but civil society, including refugees, migrants, and diaspora groups and other stakeholders.

“We have done it before—successfully,” notes Johan Ketelers, ICMC Secretary General, “as in the concerted response of over 60 states, UNHCR, IOM, and non-government organizations (including ICMC), that came together in the 1980s and 1990s on casework, processing, training programmes and resettlement of more than 2 million people who safely moved from Indochina during that period.”¹

II. *Key elements* and numbers. We advocate for states *worldwide* to pledge and receive:

[1] At least 10%, i.e., the most vulnerable²

[2] of refugees from Syria (not just Syrians);

[3] specifically from among the 4.8 million currently in Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Iraq and Egypt;

[4] through resettlement and humanitarian admissions;

¹ After ten years of resettlement of hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese refugees and others from the region, states agreed to a new, “Comprehensive Plan of Action” in 1989. The CPA continued large-scale departure and resettlement, but was also criticized for its return programmes and shortcomings in asylum procedures. The acronyms ‘UNHCR’ and ‘IOM’ stand respectively for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and International Organization for Migration.

² As of 24 March, this would amount to 480,000.

[5] that occur this calendar year 2016;

[6] with other legal pathways, e.g., humanitarian visas, scholarships, labour migration schemes, medical evacuation, community and private sponsorships, etc., on *top* of the 10%; and

[7] no reduction in admission levels for other refugees or asylum processing for spontaneous arrivals.

III. *Legal and ethical baselines* on the pledges. To respect rights and to enlarge, not divert solutions for refugees:

[1] Resettlement and other admissions can never be an excuse to block or restrict access to territory by people seeking asylum outside of those channels.

- for refugees: it is a right, not a crime to seek asylum; it is a right, not a crime to migrate irregularly for that purpose;
- for states: international refugee and human rights laws prohibit collective expulsion, i.e., being expelled without individualized assessment of asylum claims, and *refoulement*, i.e., acts that rebuff or return refugees and asylum-seekers to a place where their lives or freedoms are at risk on account of their race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.

[2] Resettlement and other admissions should never be conditioned on

- containment, detention or exchange of refugees and asylum seekers; or
- sending refugees and asylum-seekers to countries that are unsafe or that lack asylum law, processes and actual protection consistent with international law, or to countries in which they are at risk of being sent onward to such a place.

[3] Pledges should be prioritized to those most vulnerable—without discrimination; not earmarked to specific groups or categories other than to match objective requirements of particular resettlement or admission programmes, e.g., for medical evacuation, scholarships, labour migration, etc.

“Resettlement, humanitarian admissions and other legal pathways for refugees are careful, organized mechanisms that bring order”, says Mr. Ketelers. “Orderly departure, orderly arrival, organized reception, organized integration, putting practical solutions like these—with human security first, makes national security stronger. We believe that this is exactly what government leaders and people are looking for.”

About ICMC

The International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) is a non-profit organization working in the areas of refugee and migration issues, with staff and programs in over 50 countries.

In Syria, ICMC provides lifesaving assistance to internally displaced Syrians. In Jordan, ICMC delivers humanitarian assistance to Syrian refugees and Jordanian host communities. In Greece, ICMC works with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to provide help to incoming refugees and migrants and to support the Greek government in its asylum reform.

With funding from the U.S. State Department, ICMC runs the Resettlement Support Center for Turkey and the Middle East. At its offices in Istanbul and Beirut, ICMC processes the application of refugee cases referred by UNHCR for resettlement to the United States.

ICMC also works with UNHCR on a separate program to deploy resettlement experts worldwide. In 2015, more than 190 experts worked in UNHCR’s field operations in almost 40 countries.

ICMC is also the coordinator of civil society activities in the Global Forum on Migration and Development. With the support of 312 organizations worldwide, ICMC led the elaboration of a united advocacy agenda which contributed to the inclusion of migrants and migration in the new global UN Sustainable Development Goals. Among the goals unanimously adopted by 193 states at the UN in September, 2015, is to make migration “orderly, safe and regular.”