



Anglican Communion Office
at the United Nations

Informal Multi-stakeholder Hearing for the UN General Assembly High-Level Meeting to Address Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants – July 18, 2016

The Informal Multi-stakeholder Hearings for the UN General Assembly High-Level Meeting to Address Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants was held July 18th. The President of the General Assembly, Mogens Lykketofyt, convened the meeting. Following President Lykketofyt's welcome, David Donoghue, the Ambassador to Ireland, who is a co-facilitator in the creation of the Draft of the Outcome Document now in place for the September 19th Summit, discussed the importance of refugee protection and migrant rights of over 244,000,000 refugees and migrants. The latest 2015 statistic represents a 41% increase in migration since the year 2000. Ambassador Donoghue also highlighted the importance of civil society in the follow-up, and enforcement of the Outcome Document that will be adopted after the September Summit.

Following President Lykketoft and Ambassador Donoghue, a panel of three came together to discuss the Global Compact and the importance of the upcoming Summit's ability to alter the lives millions of refugees and migrants who have moved to better themselves or to escape conflict and economic difficulties. Kareen AbuZayd, the Special Advisor on the Summit on Addressing Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants, addressed the civil society members first by outlining the inclusion of over 80 member states, private sector, and civil society members' roles in contributing to the outcome document. Upon conclusion of Special Advisor AbuZayd's address, Nadia Murad Basee Taha, an Advocate for refugee rights and victims of trafficking, described how she fled from Iraq to refugee camps and the death and psychological horrors that can come from them. Advocate Taha stressed the need to reform dictatorships and eliminate terrorist organizations like ISIS and Boko Haram in order to help improve countries and decrease forced migration. Michele Levoy, Director of the Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM), spoke on eliminating policies that penalize human rights groups that assist refugees and migrants. Director Levoy discussed the importance of encouraging media to eliminate terminology that references undocumented migrants as illegals. In addition, Director Levoy stated the need to enhance the Firewall, which is the protection of justice regardless of migration status as well as the importance of granting migrants a status, the problems surrounding death in detention, transit, and deportation, and the lack of health care for migrants. Lastly, Director Levoy discussed the Outcome Document and the need for an inclusive process in the development of a road map to guide the two year process following the Summit in September.

At the completion of the opening session, two one-hour-long panels were formed. Pre-determined questions were asked to the panelists and, with time allowing, the floor was open to discussion. The moderator was Mr. Thomas Gass, Assistant Secretary-General for policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs at UN DESA. Moderator Gass asked the first question, which focused on finding an answer to combat xenophobia and encourage inclusive growth and sustainable development across nations. The four panelists were Sandra Sarie, Vice President of Talent Innovation at Information and Communications Technology Council (ICTC), Rana Najib, Education Project Coordinator of the AVSI Foundation, Richard Bennet, Representative and Head of Amnesty International's UN Office, and Sandra Vermuyten, Head of Campaigns at Public Services International.

These panelists discussed the importance of establishing socioeconomic policies as well as engaging local communities to work directly with refugees to bring awareness and empathy to their cause. The panelists also highlighted the necessity of promoting leaders of international, national, and community groups to advocate for refugees and discuss their positive societal contributions when they have access to labor rights in order to help combat against xenophobia. Once the floor was open for civil society the Syrian Forum explained that job opportunities and support programs in host countries can greatly aid in refugee integration.

The second question addressed to the panel asked how we, as civil society, can encourage leaders to create a more positive narrative of refugees and migrants. The panelists noted that all unions should have antiracist campaigns, bring communities to the refugees for community building, create government initiatives to encourage companies to hire migrants, and create community events celebrating the support of migrants and their contributions. The United Methodist Women's Representative spoke about xenophobia's stem from nationalists who do not have financial stability and the role government can play in eliminating blame the nationalists place on the refugees. The United Republic of Tanzania had a more nationalistic response as it stated that even though Tanzania is a very poor country it has always welcomed refugees. Therefore, they believe that the narrative needs to include the understanding that creating a positive narrative is possible as other countries have achieved it.

The final question from the moderator asked how NGOs and Civil Society can be a part of the global campaign to combat xenophobia. With this question in mind the panelists discussed the importance of collaboration amongst all stakeholders and employers for integration strategies, creation of positive campaigns celebrating diversity and success because of migrants, and investing in anti-racist campaigns in frontline cities that accept refugees. In an effort to end discrimination, Ms. Sybil Nmezi, Executive Director at the Generation Initiative for Women and Youth Network pleaded, through a video recording, for the international community to come together and provide refugees with access to contraceptives, safe termination of unplanned pregnancies, and important medicines to fight discrimination and forced marriage that is taking place in refugee camps. The final comments on fighting xenophobia was given by a representative of the Catholic Church who stated that paragraph 5.1 in the Outcome Document should be updated to ensure civil society can help hold member states accountable in the process of refugee protection and anti-xenophobic regions.

Upholding and protecting the dignity and human rights of all refugees and migrants was the focus of the final panel of the morning session moderated by Ms. Kate Gilmore, the Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights at OHCHR. The three stakeholder panelists were Bernice Valdez, Coordinator of Public Policy at the Institucion para las Mujeres en la Migracion, Anacleto Mbayago, Chairman of the African Disabled Refugee Organization, and Abdi Iftin, representative of the Strategy for Humanity. Moderator Gilmore asked various questions surrounding the deficiencies in international cooperation, the importance in international communities showing up to help, the best solutions and roles of private society, as well as looking at the root causes of migration and asking for recommendations from the various panelists on how to overcome them. The panelists voiced the need to implement conventions that focus on dignity and eliminate the detention of migrants, enforce implementations, look toward practical options, come together and advocate, and not encourage migrants to take dangerous journeys but instead provide for them and eliminate the causes that would lead them to do so. Members of civil society reminded everyone that 51% of the population of refugees are younger than eighteen years old and need education programs to be instated and not only encouraged. A representative stated that there are concrete plans that could be enacted, such as cash and voucher programs, which could greatly aid the host countries and the recently integrated immigrants. While a member from the International Detention Coalition recommended the complete removal of detention as well as border blockage, as it denies refugees and migrants of their fundamental liberties.

The preparatory hearings had a wide range of questions and suggestions on how to increase community acceptance and willingness to aid refugees with legal and social changes. However, the hearing only had two members mention the problems with the language and assertion in the text of the Outcome Document. This text represents the future of how member states commit and act in response to the large movement of refugees and migrants. It is important that the document be further scrutinized and reworded in order to help hold member states accountable for the safety and protection of millions of refugees and migrants.

Separate from the Hearings at the UN, a luncheon was held by Amnesty International in the UN Church Center. Members of civil society assembled in between the morning and evening sessions to further discuss the language and purpose of the Outcome Document. One of the most important points outlined by attendees was the potential negative impact the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) could have if they are linked to the Outcome Document. The SDGs have a higher level of commitment and accountability and many are worried that the more lenient Outcome Document might encourage countries to maintain the minimum rather than the highest level of commitment. As countries differ regionally and nationally, the conflicting commitment levels of the Outcome Document and SDGs could make it harder for the UN to monitor countries' progress.

Another important topic the attendees discussed was the capacity of states in accepting migrants and refugees. Attendees resolved that even though capacity is hard to determine, there are concrete mechanisms such as measuring education, healthcare, protection, and livelihood of the refugees and migrants. Once these components are measured they can conclude a country is at maximum capacity by comparing these values in other countries and ensuring that all participate in their fair share of aid. This "fair share" component is the trigger mechanism that allows for follow-up and accountability to be tangibly assessed.

Conversations like this in depth discussion on how to improve the effectiveness of the Outcome Document are crucial in enacting change and execution on the road ahead towards the September Summit. As long as civil society members remain active participants in the efforts of migrant and refugee rights, they will be able to help maintain the momentum of care and concern as well as action and change.