
Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement 2021

Concept Note

I. Background

Since 1995, the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement (ATCR) bring together the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the governments and NGOs of resettlement countries to discuss and advance resettlement issues of common interest. The ATCR provides an opportunity to produce positive outcomes by forging collaborative approaches to global resettlement. Moreover, it allows to address a wide range of policy and procedural matters, including advocacy, capacity building and operational support. An important outcome of the ATCR is the promotion and development of new and innovative ways to solve problems and combine resources to improve resettlement and complementary pathways for refugees.

In June 2020, Switzerland assumed the Chair of the ATCR 2021. The Swiss Government (represented by the State Secretariat for Migration - SEM) and the Swiss Refugee Council (SRC) as the NGO focal point will work in close collaboration with UNHCR, resettlement countries, NGOs and refugee representatives to coordinate the ATCR in 2021. Thanks to the ATCR community's efforts throughout previous years, the Refugee Steering Group (RSG) has taken up its advisory role which allows for a meaningful refugee representation throughout the ATCR cycle.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Working Group on Resettlement (WGR) will be held virtually. The kick-off meetings will take place in the last week of February 2021. The ATCR is tentatively scheduled to take place on 28 and 29 June 2021 in Geneva, Switzerland. Given the unpredictable nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Co-Chairs will reassess in spring 2021 if the ATCR conference will be held in person or virtually.

In December 2018, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR). Recognizing that third country solutions are a tangible mechanism for burden- and responsibility-sharing and a demonstration of solidarity, their expansion is one of the four objectives of the GCR. As such, the GCR mandated the Three-Year Strategy (2019-2021) on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways as a key vehicle to increase and expand opportunities for resettlement and complementary pathways.

The ATCR 2021 will provide an opportunity to take stock of achievements in the implementation of the Three-Year Strategy and to discuss the further development of third country solutions over the next seven years (2021-2028).

II. Overarching theme

In 2020, resettlement stakeholders were confronted with unprecedented challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic which drastically impacted global resettlement operations. Selection missions had to be postponed or cancelled and departures for resettlement and complementary pathways almost came to a standstill. While these challenges are unparalleled in their scope, actors have endeavored to identify innovative solutions to the greatest extent possible. The ATCR 2021 will explore how lessons learned in 2020 can provide better means of working in the present and prepare us for potential crises in the future. It will, inter alia, focus on how digitalization has shaped the refugee resettlement landscape in 2020 and which technical tools have been useful in order to continue resettlement processing.

In this light, the overarching theme for the ATCR 2021 will be:

"Strengthening capacities to promote opportunities for refugees in unprecedented times"

This theme allows to explore opportunities for global resettlement and complementary pathways in challenging times. It highlights the need to promote more and better opportunities for refugees. Moreover, it also takes into account that fewer refugees than ever before are likely to be resettled in 2020, despite the number of those in need at record levels. With the Covid-19 pandemic, the need to share experiences and best practices among resettlement actors has been amplified. The ATCR/WGR provides a forum for these exchanges as well as for dynamic discussions that go beyond the COVID-19 pandemic and encompass past achievements which can be replicated in the future.

III. Objectives for the ATCR 2021

The objectives for the ATCR 2021 are shaped by the significant impact past and present unprecedented events have had on resettlement activities, with a particular focus on the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, the Co-Chairs aim to drive previous ATCR and WGR discussions forward. These objectives are:

1. To share best practices and lessons learned with regards to resettlement processing and complementary pathways within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and in consideration of future possible disruptive events;
2. To explore needs and capacities of countries to strengthen resettlement programs in size and quality in particular for those most at risk;
3. To take stock of the Three-Year Strategy (2019-2021) on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways;

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4. To further enhance meaningful refugee participation during the ATCR process and beyond and to adjust the scope and architecture of the ATCR to reflect a multi-stakeholder approach;
 5. To share and strengthen monitoring and evaluation experiences with regards to reception and integration;
 6. To review needs and capacities of relevant stakeholders involved in complementary pathways program design and implementation, including identification, data collection and monitoring.

IV Expected outcomes of the ATCR 2021

With the above objectives, we aim to contribute to the following outcomes:

1. Stakeholders are better prepared to respond to current and future crises through new and innovative approaches;
2. Needs, opportunities and strategies to initiate new resettlement and complementary pathways programs and to expand existing ones are examined;
3. Best practices for expedited processing for people most at risk are shared;
4. Renewed commitment to the goals of the Three-Year Strategy while considering adjusting the previous ten year objectives (2018-2028) to the new context;
5. Increased refugee participation during all phases of the ATCR process has been ensured, strategies to promote refugee participation in various stages of the resettlement process have been identified and the RSG Mentoring Program has been initiated;
6. Steps have been taken to initiate a revamping of the ATCR infrastructure to better reflect new actors and strategies.