

**United Nations High Commissioner for
Refugees (UNHCR)**



AGENDA:

***Ensuring Safe and Dignified Return or
Resettlement of Refugees from Prolonged
Conflicts***

Background Guide

Welcome Letter from the Executive Board

Distinguished delegates, welcome to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Committee. We are honoured to serve as your Joint High Commissioners for this session. Our committee's focus, "*Ensuring Safe and Dignified Return or Resettlement of Refugees from Prolonged Conflicts*," is both urgent and complex. Millions of people have been uprooted by long-lasting wars and crises, living in exile far from home. Finding durable solutions, whether through voluntary repatriation or resettlement in third countries, is central to their protection. We expect delegates to engage deeply with the political, legal, and humanitarian dimensions of this issue. We urge all member states to uphold international law, international solidarity, and the core principles of refugee protection. We look forward to your thoughtful debate and innovative policy proposals.

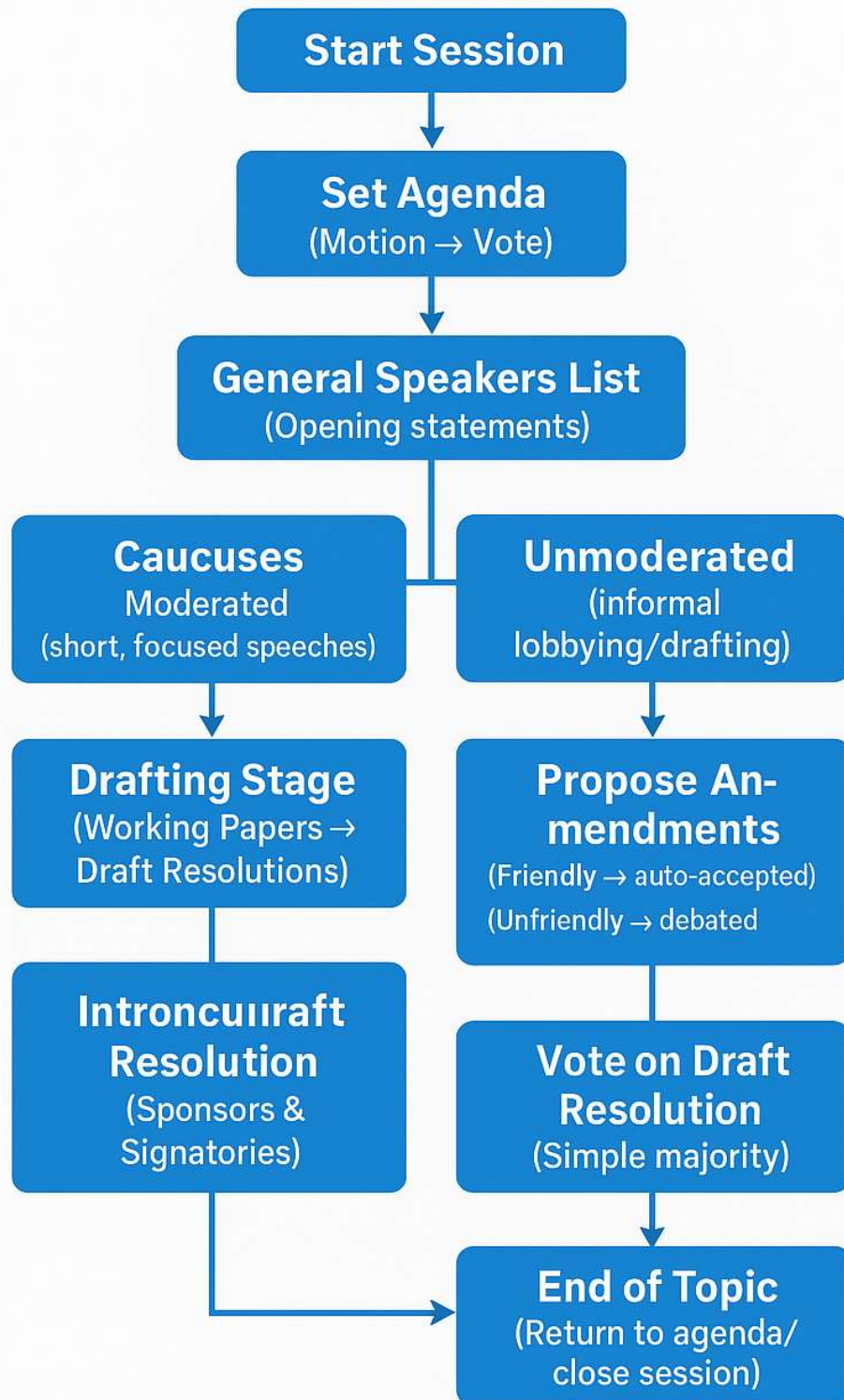
Sincerely,

Soumyakanta Mahapatra and Chirag Kundra
Joint High Commissioners, UNHCR Committee



UNA-USA RULES OF PROCEDURE

DEBATE FLOW



Rules of Procedure

ATTENDANCE (MOTION TO VERIFY THE QUORUM)

1. At the beginning of each Session and upon the Motion to verify the Quorum, the Chairpersons shall call in alphabetical order on all Member States to state their status of attendance. Member States may reply “present” or “present and voting”. Representatives stating just “present and voting” shall have no right to abstain from any vote on the substantial matter.
2. If any of the Representatives were not present during the Roll Call, upon their arrival, they shall send a note to the Chairpersons clarifying their status of presence.

QUORUM

1. The quorum signifies the minimum number of delegates who need to be present to open the Session for the debate.
2. The quorum is met when at least one-third of all delegates registered are present at the committee session. The quorum shall be verified at the beginning of each session by the Roll Call.

SETTING THE AGENDA

1. Setting the agenda is the first step to be considered by the committee.
 - a. The motion to put a topic area on the agenda should be made first. This motion requires a second.
 - b. Delegates can propose only topics as put forward by the Secretariat in the provisional agenda, i.e., the topics which were set by the Secretariat prior to the conference.
 - c. In case there is no opposition to the motion, the motion is considered to be adopted.
 - d. In case of the opposition against the proposed order of the agenda, a Speaker’s List of either two or four delegates “for” and “against” the order will be established- the number of speakers should be equal for both cases.

TYPES OF SESSIONS: DEBATE

The three modes of Debate can be introduced during

1. (Formal session) General Speaker’s List
2. (Informal Session) Moderated Caucus
3. (Informal Session) Un-Moderated Caucus Upon setting the agenda, the Speaker’s List is open- either at the discretion of the Chairs or by delegates proposing a Motion to Open Speaker’s List.

GENERAL SPEAKER’S LIST

1. The General Speaker’s List shows the order of speakers for the topic being on the agenda and is open for the whole duration of the discussion.
2. Speaking time for the General Speaker’s List is set to 90 seconds. The time limit can be altered by a Motion to Change the Speaker’s Time.
3. The Speaker’s List is open just for the topic currently on the agenda.

MODERATED CAUCUS

1. The moderated caucus is aimed at facilitating and accelerating the discussion on the issues deemed essential and critical for the topic on the agenda.
2. The motion for the moderated caucus can be introduced by any of the delegates once the Floor is open for Points and Motions. The delegate shall specify the total time of the Motion (not exceeding 20 minutes), individual speaker's time for each of the delegates (not exceeding the speaker's time set for the general Speaker's List), and the purpose of the Motion. The purpose, i.e., the topic of the Motion, shall be connected to the issue currently being discussed on the agenda and shall be more particular than the general topic of the discussion.
3. A Simple Majority of the quorum is required for the motion to pass. In case that there are more Moderated Caucuses proposed, the Committee will vote upon them in descending order according to the total time of the Caucus (i.e., from the longest to the shortest) as set by the Chairs.

UNMODERATED CAUCUS

1. Unmoderated Caucus is the most informal out of all forms of debate, during which delegates can discuss freely all issues with other delegations, lobby for their interests, resolve difficult questions about the topic on the agenda, and create working papers and resolutions.
2. The motion for Un-moderated caucus can be introduced by any of the delegates once the Floor is open for Points and Motions. The delegate shall specify the purpose of the motion and shall state the total time of the motion (not exceeding 30 minutes).
3. A Simple Majority of the quorum is required for the motion to pass.

TYPES OF YIELDS

A delegate who was granted the permission to speak by the Chairpersons shall have the right to yield his time, if remaining, to:

1. Yield to another delegate- the remaining time will be offered to another delegate as allotted by the former speaker. The delegate, if accepting the yield, cannot yield the floor to any other person except for the Chairpersons.
2. Yield to POINT OF INFORMATION- If the delegate is open to questions, it is at the discretion of the Chairpersons to grant this right to any delegate willing to pose an inquiry to the delegate within the remaining time allocated to the delegate. Inquiries are not counted into the remaining speaker's time, unlike the answers provided by the delegate. The delegate who yielded his time to questions can refuse to answer any of them at his discretion. Also, Chairpersons shall call to order any delegate whose inquiry, by its character, does not comply with the standards.
3. Yield back to the Chairs- if there is remaining time left, but the delegate is not wishing to answer any questions or give his allocated time to another delegate, he /she can yield his time back to the Chairpersons, who will proceed with another delegate on the Speaker's List/ wishing to speak afterwards.

TYPES OF POINTS

1. Point of Personal Privilege- A delegate may raise the Point of Personal Privilege in case of whichever kind of personal discomfort that prevents them from full participation in the debate. Such a thing can

be, for example audibility of other speakers, switching of air conditioning, etc. A Point of Personal Privilege can interrupt the speaker only in the case of poor audibility.

2. Point of Parliamentary Inquiry- A delegate may raise the Point of Parliamentary Inquiry to clarify certain aspects of the Rules of Procedure by the Chairpersons. Such a Point may not interrupt speakers and can be introduced only when the Floor is open for Points and Motions.

3. Point of Order- A delegate may raise the Point of Order if there is a discrepancy or any impropriety in the application of the Rules of Procedure by the delegates or Chairpersons. It is in the discretion of the Chairs to decide whether their point is valid and to clarify any irregularities. The Point of Order may not interrupt a speech.

4. Point Of Information- Explained in previous slide, RIGHT OF REPLY Delegate, whose country's national integrity or sovereignty has been contested, may require Right of Reply. The Chairpersons may decide to give a certain time limit to the Delegate to respond and to rule whether the Right of Reply is in order. The decision of the Chairs is not subject to appeal.

TYPES OF DOCUMENTATION

WORKING PAPERS

1. Working papers are intended to aid with the work of the Committee and especially the Draft Resolution, as well as to present the viewpoints of the delegates and the potential solutions to the topic.
2. A working paper does not require any Signatories or Sponsors. However, it should bear the name of the delegate or delegates who proposed it.
3. There is no set format for the Working Paper, i.e., the working paper does not have to be introduced in the resolution format. The Working Paper is referred to by its designated number.

POSITION PAPER

Position Paper, also known as Policy Paper, is a strategic document that gives an overview of a delegate's country position. A good Position Paper has three parts:

- 1) Country's Position on the Topic
- 2) Country's Relation to the Topic
- 3) Proposals of Policies to Pass in a Resolution

PRESS RELEASE

These are tools used by committees or individuals to inform "the public" in the crisis about certain facts, or to spread misinformation about the ongoing crisis.

Main Components of a Solid Press Release:

- Header stating that it is a Press Release
- Descriptive Headline
- Information that you want the public to have and react to
- Signature/s Goals
- To inform/ misinform the public about the crisis to get the public to react in a certain way
- To share information with the committee that was previously a secret
- To encourage a response from the international community

DRAFT RESOLUTION

1. Draft Resolution means a document drafted in the official format of the resolution.
2. No Draft Resolution shall be circulated without the previous approval of its required format and number of Sponsors and Signatories by the Chairpersons.
3. The ones recognized as the writers of the Draft Resolution are called “Sponsors”. Chairpersons will set the required minimum number of Sponsors according to each Committee.
4. “Signatories” are the ones supporting the discussion regarding the Draft Resolution on the Floor and bear no further obligation. Chairpersons will set the required minimum number of Signatories according to each Committee.
5. One Member State cannot be “Sponsor” and “Signatory” at the same time.
6. Once the Draft Resolution has been introduced, delegates cannot add themselves to the list of Sponsors anymore. However, they can be removed from the list by passing a request in written form to the Chairs. If the Draft Resolution does not have the number of Sponsors required, the document will be removed from the Floor immediately.
7. Delegates wishing to be added or removed from the list of Signatories can do so at any time. The request to do so should be passed to the Chairs in written form.
8. More than one Draft Resolution can be on the Floor at once.

AMENDMENTS

1. An amendment is a document which modifies, deletes, adds or revises one or more parts of the Draft Resolution.
2. Amendment can be proposed by any delegate on any part or Clause of the Draft Resolution. All amendments shall be submitted in the written form to the Chairpersons. There are two types of Amendments:
 - a. Friendly Amendment- Amendments accepted and approved by all Sponsors of the Draft Resolution shall be considered Friendly. They shall be implemented in the Draft Resolution without the need to be voted upon.
 - b. Unfriendly Amendment- Amendments not approved by all the Sponsors shall be considered Unfriendly. The required number of Sponsors needed for Unfriendly Amendment shall be set by the Chairpersons according to each Committee. Any Amendments to Unfriendly Amendment are out of order. Unfriendly Amendment can be withdrawn from the Floor by all its Sponsors before being voted upon; such withdrawal shall be submitted in the written form to the Chairpersons.

VOTING PROCEDURAL AND SUBSTANTIVE VOTES

1. Substantive votes shall be considered those referring to resolutions, amendments, or their parts. During substantive votes, delegates can vote either in favor, against, or abstain. Delegates stating “Present and voting” during the Roll Call cannot abstain. Substantive voting is being done by the Member States only, i.e., observers have no right to vote.
2. Procedural votes shall be considered those referring to other voting procedures except those mentioned above. During a procedural vote, no abstentions are allowed. During procedural voting, all observers have the right to vote.

Introduction:

The world faces a record displacement crisis. By the end of 2024, **123.2 million people** were forcibly displaced worldwide, more than one in 67 people. These include **refugees, asylum-seekers, and internally displaced persons (IDPs)**, many of whom have fled protracted armed conflicts. Remarkably, over one-third of all the world's forcibly displaced are from just four countries – **Sudan (14.3 million), Syria (13.5 million), Afghanistan (10.3 million) and Ukraine (8.8 million)**. Many of these conflicts have lasted for years or decades, creating *protracted refugee situations*. UNHCR defines such a situation as one where refugees “find themselves in a long-lasting and intractable state of limbo,” with unmet basic needs even after many years in exile.

Prolonged conflict denies civilians the right to return home safely. In countless cases, refugees live in camps or urban settings for years without prospects. The aftermath of war – destroyed homes, shattered institutions, and deep mistrust – means that return can only be sustainable if serious conditions are met. The UNHCR mandate is to protect refugees and to identify durable solutions for them. This mandate comes from the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, which emphasize voluntary repatriation only when it is safe and dignified. The UN also upholds the principle of *non-refoulement* – forbidding forced return to danger. In practice, UNHCR works on all three recognized “durable solutions” (voluntary return, local integration, and resettlement) and on creating conditions that allow these solutions to be realized.

Despite many **repatriation campaigns and resettlement programs**, the international community struggles to bring lasting solutions to protracted refugee crises. In 2024, UNHCR reported that **9.8 million** displaced people returned to their homes globally (8.2 million IDPs and 1.6 million refugees). However, 92% of these returns were confined to just four countries – Afghanistan, Syria, South Sudan and Ukraine – illustrating both the scale of certain conflicts and the limited scope of return. Even where returns happen, they often occur in “*adverse conditions*”. For example, recent UNHCR analysis finds that many Afghans and Syrians who returned faced severe poverty, unemployment, inadequate public services and food insecurity. Women and girls in some contexts returned to environments where even basic rights (such as education and freedom of movement) were being curtailed.

These facts underline the critical challenge: **How can the world ensure that refugees from long-lasting conflicts can go home – or rebuild their lives elsewhere – in safety and dignity?** This committee must consider the political will, the resources, the laws, and the ground realities that affect return and resettlement. Our discussion should address the underlying causes of displacement, the responsibilities of countries of origin, the burdens on host communities, and the protection and human rights of all displaced people.

Mandate and Legal Framework:

UNHCR's mandate is rooted in international law. The 1951 Refugee Convention obliges states to protect refugees and allows for voluntary repatriation only when conditions permit. The notion of a "*safe and dignified return*" is well-established in humanitarian practice. It implies not only physical safety from violence, but also restoration of rights and means of livelihood. For example, CSCE (now OSCE) commitments have stressed that "safe and dignified return for refugees and internally displaced persons to their homes and properties must be guaranteed," indicating that property rights and security are essential. The UN High Commissioner's Executive Committee has likewise affirmed that returns must be voluntary and accompanied by support for reintegration.

In recent years, global frameworks have reinforced this. The **Global Compact on Refugees (2018)** explicitly lists "*support[ing] conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity*" as one of its key objectives. The Compact emphasizes international cooperation and burden-sharing: it states that "*no country or community should have to deal with refugee situations on their own,*" calling for support not only for displaced people and host communities, but also for countries of origin to create conducive conditions for return. These commitments form the basis of our committee's work and should guide every resolution we draft.



Current Situation and Challenges:

Protracted conflicts create special obstacles. In **long-lasting wars**, combatants and perpetrators may remain at large, rule of law can collapse, and society can fracture along ethnic or sectarian lines. When fighting subsides, refugees may find their villages destroyed or still mined, local administrations weakened, and many former neighbours absent or hostile. The *political impasse* that often underlies a protracted conflict makes negotiated solutions – like safe return or reconciliation – extremely difficult. For instance, millions of Rohingya Muslims fled Myanmar’s Rakhine State after violence in 2017; despite diplomatic talks, they remain for the most part in Bangladesh refugee camps, unable to return to a still-persecutory situation. Similarly, Syria’s nearly 14-year conflict left much of the country in ruins. Even after significant foreign troop withdrawals, analysts warn that the concept of “voluntary, safe and dignified return” faces major hurdles in Syria, because “*state apparatuses have been systematically dismantled, social contracts...violently severed, and economic structures...destroyed.*” This “*infrastructure of displacement*” means return is impossible without massive reconstruction and legal reform.

The **human impact** of these challenges is stark. Many refugees spend years or decades in camps or cities abroad with little hope. Children miss schooling; adults lose skills; families split apart. A long exile often turns into dependency on aid, leaving refugees without jobs or prospects. Host countries bear strains as well: countries like Lebanon, Jordan, Pakistan and Bangladesh have hosted millions of refugees, often at great cost to their own resources and infrastructure. As UNHCR’s 2024 report notes, decisions by host states (like expulsion campaigns or restrictions on work) can force return movements even in tough circumstances. Funding shortages also hamper durable solutions: UNHCR warns that recent cuts in humanitarian funding threaten the ability to “*create conducive conditions for a safe and dignified return*”.

In summary, the **problem statement** for this committee is: *Refugees from protracted conflicts face serious barriers to safe return or resettlement, endangering their rights and well-being. We must identify how international law, cooperation, and resources can overcome these barriers so that returns (if any) are truly voluntary, safe, and dignified, and alternatives like resettlement or integration are viable when return is not.*

Durable Solutions and UNHCR Efforts:

The UN and UNHCR recognize three **durable solutions** for refugees. Our solutions discussion should consider all three, focusing on their relation to safety and dignity:

- **Voluntary Repatriation:** Returning home voluntarily is often the preferred solution for refugees. UNHCR emphasizes that “*millions of refugees dream of going home,*” but notes that repatriation “*in safety and dignity*” requires strong commitment by the origin country and continued international support. In practice, UNHCR assists by organizing “go-and-see” visits, providing information about conditions at home, promoting peace and reconciliation initiatives, and helping with housing and property restitution and return assistance. The voluntary character of return is paramount – no refugee should be forced back to a dangerous situation.
- **Local Integration:** When repatriation is not feasible, integration into the country of asylum is the other major durable solution. UNHCR explains that some refugees “*cannot return because their countries are engulfed by endless conflict or because they fear persecution*”, so finding a permanent home in the host country can offer a chance to build a new life. Local integration is a long-term, complex process – acquiring legal rights, accessing livelihoods, education and social services, and eventually even nationality. It imposes significant demands on both refugees and host society. UNHCR points out that over 1.1 million refugees became citizens of their asylum country in the past decade, showing that integration can succeed with proper support.
- **Third-Country Resettlement:** For some of the world’s most vulnerable refugees, resettlement to a willing third country is a life-saving option. UNHCR is mandated to pursue resettlement as one of its three solutions. Resettlement involves transferring a refugee from the country of asylum to another state which agrees to admit them and ultimately grant permanent residence. It is unique because it provides immediate protection and long-term stability in a new setting. Resettlement places are limited, however; UNHCR data show that in 2024 only about 188,800 refugees were resettled, far below the estimated 1.2 million in need. Governments and NGOs in resettlement countries work to help arriving refugees integrate through language courses, vocational training, and access to education and jobs.

Each solution must be pursued with dignity in mind: returnees or migrants should have legal rights, the ability to rebuild their lives, and the choice of where to go. The **Global Compact on Refugees** recognizes that these three traditional solutions (return, integration, resettlement) must be complemented by creative approaches (such as humanitarian visas, family reunification programs, education or labor schemes) to expand opportunities and ease pressure on host states. Crucially, the Compact reinforces that “*refugees prefer to return to their country of origin*”, but return remains challenging unless conditions improve.

Challenges to Safe Return and Resettlement:

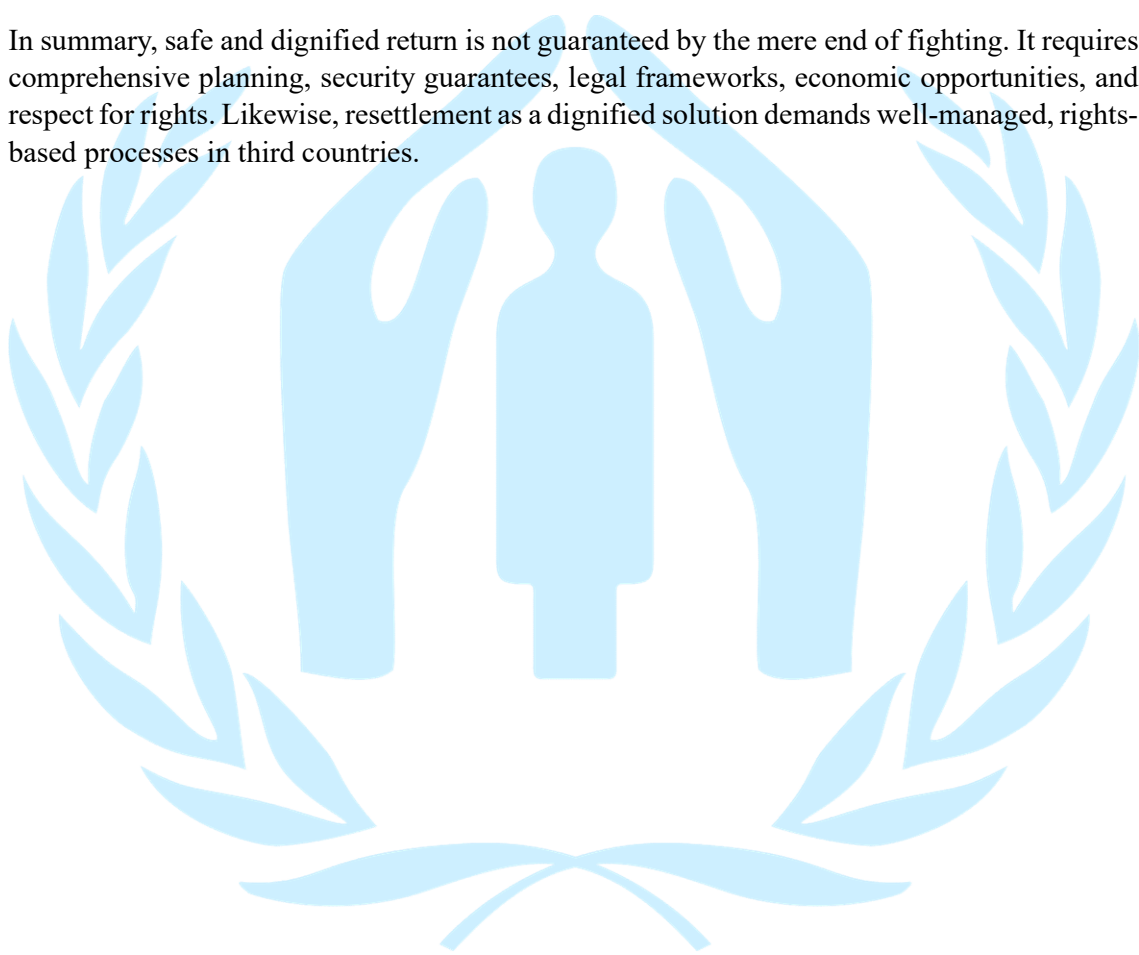
Delegates should identify and analyze the main obstacles that prevent returns or resettlement from being safe and dignified. Key challenges include:

- **Ongoing Insecurity and Lack of Peace:** In many origin countries, conflict or violence persists. Without a lasting ceasefire or peace deal, returnees' risk being caught in new fighting, landmines, or attacks by armed groups. UNHCR leadership emphasizes that *"lasting peace, or at least a cessation of fighting, is paramount"* for returns to be sustainable. Where political solutions are weak (as in Syria, Afghanistan, or parts of Sudan), premature returns can leave people in grave danger.
- **Destroyed Infrastructure and Services:** War often destroys homes, schools, hospitals, roads, and utilities. Returning to a ruin is hardly a dignified outcome. For example, analysis of post-2024 Syria notes that the "infrastructure of displacement" – destroyed institutions and broken social contracts – poses a "self-perpetuating barrier to return". If shelters are lost and public services have collapsed, basic survival is threatened. It may be years or decades before cities and villages are rebuilt.
- **Legal and Property Barriers:** Refugees often flee without documents or leave behind property records. Upon return, many lack proof of ownership of their land or homes. They may find their property occupied or destroyed. These issues are magnified by legal complexities – as in Syria, only 20% of returnees possess deeds to their property, and gendered laws can leave widows or female heads of households especially vulnerable. Without access to documentation or restitution processes, refugees cannot reclaim livelihoods.
- **Social and Ethnic Tensions:** Conflicts often create or exacerbate social divisions. In some cases, returning refugees may fear retribution or discrimination in their home communities (for example, certain ethnic minorities or political groups). "Reintegration" requires reconciliation measures – dialogue between communities, justice mechanisms for atrocities, and anti-discrimination policies. Without trust and safety guarantees, many refugees prefer to stay away. UNHCR's field reports underline the need to work on reconciliation in origin areas as part of repatriation support.
- **Rights and Gender Concerns:** We must ensure that returns and resettlement respect human rights. Any return must be *voluntary*; forced or coerced return violates international law. Women, children, the elderly, and disabled refugees require special protections. The 2024 Global Trends report highlights that returning women and girls can face acute rights erosion – in Afghanistan, for instance, women lost educational and movement rights. Solutions must be designed so that vulnerable groups are not disproportionately harmed.
- **Host Country Constraints:** Many refugees live for years in host countries, but those countries may have tight limits on refugees' rights (e.g. no legal work or travel allowed). These constraints make local integration difficult and may push refugees to seek return or risky onward migration. For example, Pakistan's policies on undocumented Afghans have accelerated returns. Refugees in urban settings often struggle to access healthcare or schools, undermining dignity. Delegates should consider how to encourage host

states to provide rights and opportunities to refugees as part of a comprehensive strategy.

- **Financial and Political Support:** Sustainable return programs require money for reconstruction, as well as political backing. The UN High Commissioner warned that recent funding cuts put at risk the ability “to create conducive conditions for a safe and dignified return”. Without donor support, the burden falls on already struggling origin and host countries. Moreover, international attention tends to shift – crises like the Rohingya or Syria often fade from headlines as new emergencies emerge, leading to a funding shortfall. The committee should address how to maintain predictable, long-term support for refugees and returnees.

In summary, safe and dignified return is not guaranteed by the mere end of fighting. It requires comprehensive planning, security guarantees, legal frameworks, economic opportunities, and respect for rights. Likewise, resettlement as a dignified solution demands well-managed, rights-based processes in third countries.

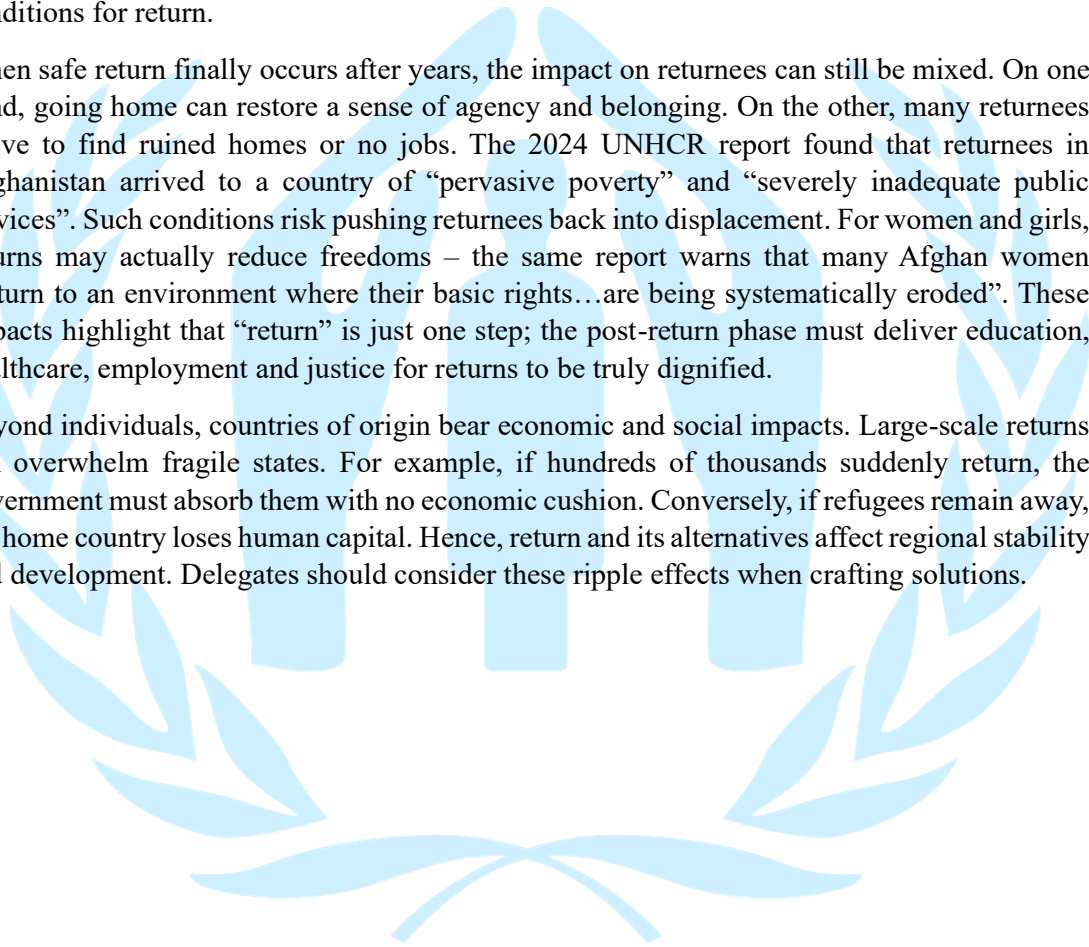


Impact of Prolonged Displacement:

Protracted exile inflicts deep scars on refugees and their societies. Individuals often experience trauma from violence and years of uncertainty. Children growing up in camps miss years of school. Refugees may lose contact with family members, lose their language or cultural ties, and suffer from statelessness if their citizenship is revoked. Long-term camps or urban settlements can strain local resources and sometimes foster tensions with host communities. Economies of neighboring states may be affected: while refugees can contribute economically if given opportunities, they can also increase competition for jobs and housing, fueling resentment. As UNHCR notes, supporting host communities is crucial – “More support is needed...for the communities that host [refugees], and for their countries of origin” to create conditions for return.

When safe return finally occurs after years, the impact on returnees can still be mixed. On one hand, going home can restore a sense of agency and belonging. On the other, many returnees arrive to find ruined homes or no jobs. The 2024 UNHCR report found that returnees in Afghanistan arrived to a country of “pervasive poverty” and “severely inadequate public services”. Such conditions risk pushing returnees back into displacement. For women and girls, returns may actually reduce freedoms – the same report warns that many Afghan women “return to an environment where their basic rights...are being systematically eroded”. These impacts highlight that “return” is just one step; the post-return phase must deliver education, healthcare, employment and justice for returns to be truly dignified.

Beyond individuals, countries of origin bear economic and social impacts. Large-scale returns can overwhelm fragile states. For example, if hundreds of thousands suddenly return, the government must absorb them with no economic cushion. Conversely, if refugees remain away, the home country loses human capital. Hence, return and its alternatives affect regional stability and development. Delegates should consider these ripple effects when crafting solutions.



Case Study: Rohingya Refugees (Myanmar–Bangladesh)

The Rohingya crisis exemplifies the complexities of safe return. In August 2017, violent military operations in Myanmar’s Rakhine State forced **over 700,000 Rohingya Muslims** to flee across the border into Bangladesh. Today, Bangladesh hosts roughly **one million** Rohingya refugees, making the settlements in Cox’s Bazar the world’s largest refugee “camp city” with over 930,000 people. The Rohingya call Myanmar home, but the conditions in Rakhine remain unsafe. Myanmar has dismantled citizenship rights for them, and ethnic tensions and discrimination persist.

Bangladesh has shown generosity, providing shelter and even COVID-19 vaccinations to refugees. However, Dhaka makes clear it views this as a temporary situation; Rohingya are not given permanent status or full rights. The international community has urged solutions. UNHCR’s High Commissioner Filippo Grandi has repeatedly stressed that Rohingya *desire to return home “when conditions allow”*, but calls on all states to address the roots of their exile. He noted that *“solutions lie within Myanmar”* – meaning that until Myanmar provides safety, justice and rights, returns cannot happen. In the meantime, Grandi appealed for sustained international support to Bangladesh, emphasizing that refugees’ lives depend on the world’s response.

Several agreements between Bangladesh and Myanmar to repatriate Rohingya have faltered because refugees rightly fear for their safety. This case underscores the point that even when camps and host states are willing, returns cannot be “safe and dignified” if the home government is unwilling to grant citizenship, security, and resources. For decades, Rohingya have been stateless; international reports indicate they would prefer home if those conditions changed. The committee should therefore note this example: any resolution on returns must consider justice (e.g. prosecution of crimes), restoration of rights, and accountability as prerequisites for safe repatriation. Meanwhile, durable solutions like family reunification, local integration, or third-country resettlement remain vital for Rohingya living in limbo.

Case Study: Syrian Refugees

The Syrian conflict (beginning 2011) generated one of the largest displacement crises in history. According to UNHCR, an estimated **13.5 million Syrians** were forcibly displaced by late 2024 – including around 6.8 million refugees abroad and an almost equal number of internally displaced. Neighbouring countries – especially Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, and Iraq – absorbed most refugees. These refugees have endured harsh conditions in camps and cities, often with few rights.

Resettlement offers have been limited: available quotas plunged 54% between 2016 and 2017, and many refugees found no immediate solution aside from waiting. Only a few hundred thousand Syrians were verified as having returned home by mid-2024, a tiny fraction of those displaced. Those who have returned did so under fragile circumstances. For example, UNHCR reports that 92% of the 1.6 million refugee returns in 2024 went to just four countries (including Syria), but many of those returnees arrived to destruction. Aid and UN agencies in Syria have emphasized that most return movements have been self-initiated and that the conditions remain dire. UNHCR notes that it is working to address obstacles and create an “enabling environment” for voluntary return, consistent with refugee choices.

Human rights concerns persist. A recent analysis points out that even after the Assad regime fell (Dec 2024), sustainable return in Syria requires more than political change – it requires massive reconstruction of society. The study highlights that returning Syrians confront a “*triple bind*”: destroyed homes without records, non-functioning courts, and a lack of rule of law, all of which hinder them from reclaiming property or receiving services. Women face special challenges – many households are female-headed and Syrian property law can be discriminatory toward women. These conditions show that without comprehensive rebuilding and legal reform, millions of refugees may never return.

The Syrian case teaches that post-conflict transition is not enough to guarantee a safe return. It reinforces that “*voluntary, safe and dignified return*” requires solid infrastructure, functioning governance, and social cohesion – all of which take years beyond the cessation of violence. For delegates, the Syrian example underscores the need for multifaceted solutions: not just transporting refugees’ home, but also funding reconstruction, endorsing fair property laws, supporting reconciliation, and potentially offering alternatives like job training or resettlement for those who cannot or choose not to return.



International Cooperation and the Global Compact:

The Global Compact on Refugees (2018) provides a roadmap for burden-sharing and cooperation. Its four objectives are to (a) **ease pressure on host countries**, (b) **enhance refugee self-reliance**, (c) **expand third-country solutions**, and (d) **support conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity**. The Compact explicitly recognizes that *“the most effective way of achieving durable solutions is by eliminating the root causes and triggers of forced displacement, including through political and security cooperation, diplomacy, development and the promotion of human rights.”* In other words, refugees’ fate is linked to peacebuilding and development in their home regions.

For this committee, the Compact’s guidelines are instructive. It calls on states and stakeholders to:

- Invest in **refugee-hosting countries** (through funding, infrastructure projects, education) so refugees can live with dignity while abroad.
- Strengthen **peace processes and conflict resolution** in origin states to create the security needed for return.
- Offer **resettlement and complementary pathways** (such as student or labor visas) to relieve heavily burdened hosts.
- Assist **countries of origin** post-conflict with rebuilding schools, hospitals, and legal systems to enable reintegration.

Critically, the Compact emphasizes solidarity: *“No country...should have to deal with refugee situations on their own.”* This means international responsibility-sharing is imperative. In practice, that could involve multi-lateral trusts funds, bilateral agreements on refugee admissions, and cross-border coordination of aid. Delegates should consider how their own countries can contribute – whether through monetary pledges, offering resettlement slots, or providing technical assistance in reconstruction.

Several UN bodies have already acted on this topic. General Assembly and Security Council resolutions have called for timely, voluntary, safe and dignified return of refugees and for respect of their human rights. For example, Security Council meetings on Syria and Sudan in 2024 emphasized that conditions must be suitable before refugees return. Delegates should review recent UN resolutions relevant to specific crises (such as Rohingya, Syria, or Sudan) to understand precedents.

Questions a Resolution Must Answer (QARMA)

To focus debate, consider that any resolution on this topic should address the following questions:

- **Who:** Which parties will implement the solution (governments of origin, host states, UN agencies, NGOs, etc.)? How will refugees' voices and needs be included?
- **What:** What concrete actions will ensure returns are voluntary and safe? (e.g. security guarantees, reconciliation programs, property restitution). What measures support refugees who remain abroad (e.g. expanded resettlement, livelihoods programs, education)?
- **Where:** In which situations and locations is return possible or impossible? How will the needs in high-pressure host areas (e.g. camps in Bangladesh or Lebanon) versus stable host areas (e.g. urban centers) be addressed?
- **When:** Under what conditions or timelines will returns or resettlement proceed? How will urgent cases (e.g. vulnerable groups) be fast-tracked?
- **Why/How:** How will the plan ensure compliance with human rights (non-refoulement, women's rights, child welfare)? Why are proposed methods the most suitable given political realities?
- **Financing:** What funding mechanisms or international support will be mobilized to finance the solutions (reconstruction aid, UN budgets, bilateral funding)?
- **Sustainability:** How will the long-term sustainability of solutions be evaluated and monitored? (E.g. will there be follow-up UN missions, reporting requirements?)

Addressing these questions helps ensure the resolution is complete, actionable, and responsive to the root issues.

Additional Considerations:

Beyond the immediate return/resettlement debate, delegates should also address related thematic issues:

- **Addressing Root Causes and Peacebuilding:** The committee must recognize that without peace and good governance, solutions will fail. Conflict resolution, security sector reform, and transitional justice in the country of origin are often prerequisites for safe return. As UNHCR highlights, the “*search for peace must be at the heart of all efforts to find long-lasting solutions*”. Initiatives might include support for peace negotiations, demining operations, and democratization efforts. Refugee returns can be integrated into peace agreements as confidence-building measures, but only if minimum conditions (such as ceasefires and human rights guarantees) are met.
- **Responsibility-Sharing and Sustainable Funding:** Devising a solution requires predictable funding. The international community should bolster UNHCR’s capacity through contributions to refugee funds and peacebuilding instruments. Delegates should consider incentives for donor states (e.g. matching funding, visibility of impact) and ensure accountability for aid. Burden-sharing is not only financial: sharing also means accepting refugees. Many countries struggle to meet resettlement quotas. Expanding complementary pathways (scholarships, labor permits) can relieve pressure. Private sector and civil society also play a role: engaging them in job creation or refugee sponsorship programs can enhance self-reliance and ease integration.
- **Rights and Protection of Returnees:** Safeguarding human rights is non-negotiable. Resolutions must reaffirm that returns are voluntary and in dignity. Refugees must have access to justice, civil documentation, and basic services in their countries of origin or resettlement states. Special attention should be given to women, children, the elderly, and the disabled. For example, UNHCR notes that in Afghanistan women’s education and movement were curtailed after return. Resolutions should include clauses protecting these groups, possibly through funding for gender-focused aid or monitoring missions. Human rights bodies and NGOs should be involved in any return program to ensure compliance.
- **Integration of Displaced in Development:** Although the topic emphasizes returns/resettlement, delegates should also consider how refugee solutions tie into broader development goals. Aligning refugee aid with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can yield dividends. For instance, incorporating refugees into national health and education systems can strengthen community services. Vocational training and microfinance projects can help refugees contribute economically, reducing dependence on aid. This development-oriented view can make solutions more durable and dignified, as refugees gain autonomy rather than remaining perpetual aid recipients.

By thoroughly exploring these issues – root causes, funding, rights, and development linkages – delegates will ensure their resolutions are holistic and grounded in reality.

Conclusion

Prolonged conflicts create complex refugee situations with no easy fixes. This committee's challenge is to chart a balanced path: facilitating returns where it truly improves lives, while ensuring that returnees (or those who stay abroad) live in dignity and security. Delegates should remember that *the ultimate measure of a solution is how it improves the actual lives of refugees and host communities*. Every proposed clause must be scrutinized: will it help refugees make an informed, free choice? Will it galvanize the necessary political will or resources?

We encourage all delegations to use the available data – such as UNHCR's reports and case studies – as evidence for realistic policymaking. The world's refugees depend on our deliberations to build a future where no displaced person is forgotten or left in limbo. Let us work together to ensure that every refugee affected by protracted conflict can eventually reclaim a life of safety, dignity, and hope.

Quick References:

Core Legal Instruments

- UN General Assembly. *1951 Refugee Convention and 1967 Protocol*. Available via UNHCR: <https://www.unhcr.org>
- OSCE. *Commitments on Refugees and IDPs*. (for “safe and dignified return” references)

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Global Policy Frameworks

- United Nations. *Global Compact on Refugees*. Adopted December 2018.
- UN General Assembly. *Resolution 73/151 on the Global Compact on Refugees* (2018).

Case Study

- Human Rights Council. *Report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar*.
- UNHCR Syria Situation Updates (latest field reports).
- International Crisis Group reports on Sudan, Afghanistan, and Syria.