

## MENA Civil Society Network for Displacement

Meeting of the Founding Committee

*Doha, Qatar, 22 February 2017*

*5 March 2017*

### I. Introduction

Members of the founding committee for the MENA Civil Society Network for Displacement (hereinafter referred to as “the network”) gathered in Doha, Qatar, on 22 February 2017, with a view to move forward on the establishment of the network. Participants included civil society representation from across the region and across different sectors, including NGOs, foundations, academia, and media. Building on previous consultations and meetings at regional, sub-regional and national levels, the meeting aimed at discussing and agreeing on the fundamental details of the network and its charter at a technical level.

The MENA Civil Society Network for Displacement provides a platform for regional dialogue and is unique both in its geographical scope and diversity of its members. In line with the core elements of the New York Declaration, the network members reaffirmed their commitment towards international solidarity and responsibility sharing, and the protection of refugees and displaced persons and their host communities. Furthermore and in line with the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) which emphasizes the need for wider engagement in responding to displacement crises, the meeting provided a key opportunity to connect a diverse group, from various sectors, with a view to creating synergies and finding common denominators for advocacy on issues of common interest at a critical time for the region.

### II. Key Remarks

Mr. Mohammed Al-Ghamdi of Qatar Charity, welcomed participants to Doha and stressed the importance of civil society’s engagement in displacement related matters at a juncture where the region is facing the largest humanitarian crisis in recent history.

Keynote speaker, Dr. Ahmed Al Meraikhi, UN Secretary General Humanitarian Envoy expressed willingness to support civil society in the region, noting the aim to bridge the practical and perceptual gaps between States, the private sector, NGOs and UN agencies when it comes to humanitarian efforts.

Mr. Amin Awad, UNHCR Director for the Middle East and North Africa, highlighted the relevance of meaningful partnerships and the pioneering dimension of the network as an inclusive and diverse platform. He noted that UNHCR is committed to act as a catalyst and convener of the network, and to provide the support needed to build the foundation and long-term capacity of this transformative initiative.

### III. Update on national consultations

Participants provided an update on developments at a national level. As part of the larger regional network and in coordination with UNHCR focal points from each participating country, members are moving forward in setting-up national committees, with varying stages of development being noted. Some have established national structures for coordination and activity planning and have identified priority themes for 2017, while others are still in the process of establishing structures specific to their national context and identifying priority focus areas for the year.

### IV. Mission, Vision, Objectives and Guiding Principles

In an exercise aimed at determining the identity and role of the network, participants discussed the mission, vision, objectives and guiding principles, and reached collective agreement on a fine-tuned language. Furthermore, other articles from the network's Charter were revised and amended by UNHCR, in accordance with the discussions on the topic and all comments received (see Annex I- The MENA CSND final charter).

## V. Membership

- **Rights and responsibilities:** It was agreed that all members of the network will have equal rights and responsibilities.
- **Founding members:** It was agreed that mention of founding members would be included in the Charter's preamble.
- **Membership criteria:** Membership in the MENA CSND will be open to all Middle East and North Africa civil society organizations committed to advocating for the rights of refugees and displaced persons in the region. Discussions took place about the concept of "civil society", however, it was agreed that this terminology should be interpreted in a broader and inclusive sense, in order to build bridges with and coordination amongst the widest range of relevant actors.
- With regard to membership for individuals, it was agreed that individuals could be invited to participate as observers or resource persons in areas of specific expertise at this stage of the network's development, with a view to revisiting the principle in the future.
- **Process for prospective members:** The importance of the role of national committees when deciding upon new members was stressed, with a view to ensuring cohesion between national and regional dimensions of the network. The admission of civil society actors to membership in the MENA CSND will be determined by the Steering Committee upon the recommendation of the national committee of the respective country, and subject to due diligence processes for new members undertaken by the Secretariat.

## PROCESS FOR APPROVAL OF NEW MEMBERS

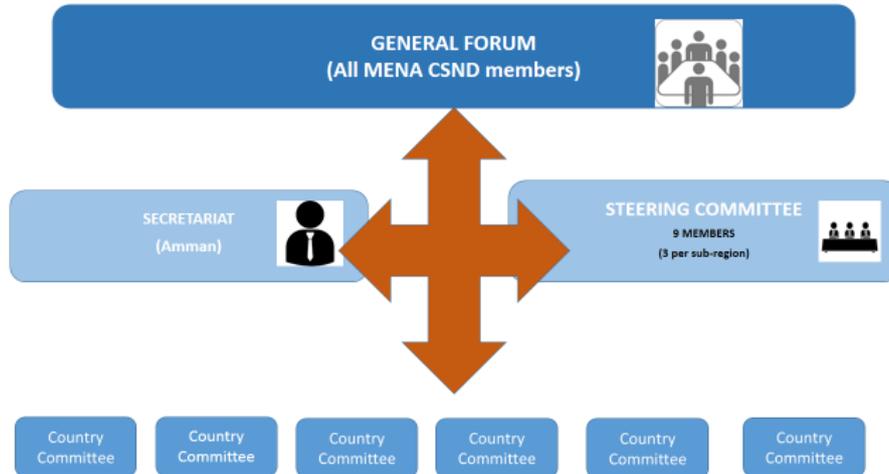


## VI. Structure and Governance

When discussing the structure and governance for the network, it was agreed that the organs of the network will be: **General Forum**, **Steering Committee**, and **Secretariat** with the following criteria.

- **General Forum:** The General Forum will meet once a year and will be responsible for deciding on the policy and programme priorities of the network.
- **Steering Committee:** The Steering Committee will be composed of one member per country. The Steering Committee will ensure that the network follows its mission, and will provide approval of policy and strategy, as well as the monitoring of the network's strategic and annual action plans.

- **Secretariat:** The initial Secretariat base will be Amman, it was agreed that the Executive Director of the network would be identified by UNHCR, with the selection done in consultation with the founding committee. Draft terms of reference for the Executive Director have been developed by UNHCR and will be finalized pending feedback from members of the founding committee (See Annex II- Terms of Reference for the Executive Director). A draft code of conduct will be developed by the Executive Director, to be discussed by the founding committee.



### Network Resources

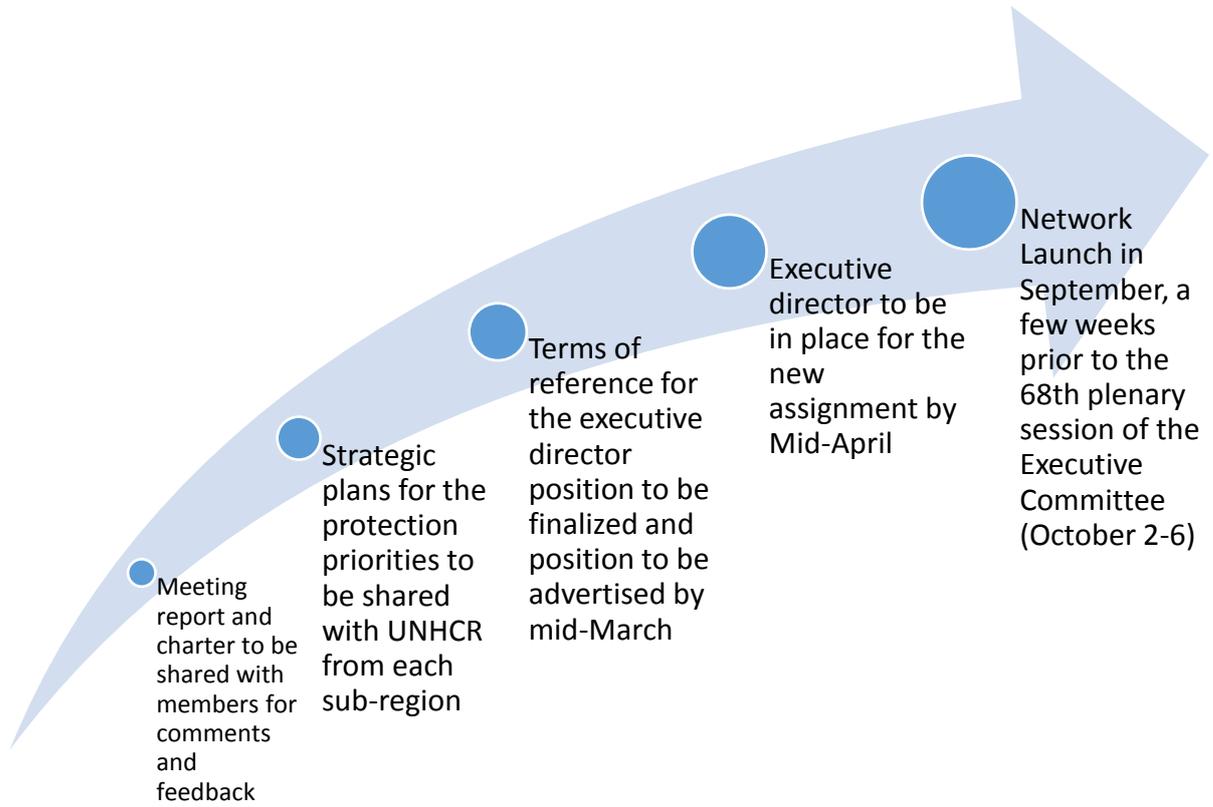
Participants discussed funding opportunities for the network and agreed on the need to find sustainable funding avenues moving forward, with a funding plan to be established by the Executive Director. Furthermore, UNHCR confirmed the provision of seed money along with an active role in supporting the search for funding opportunities with governments and the private sector. Participants highlighted that a fundraising plan must be put in place, but will be dependent on the legal status of the network, yet could still also be pursued through crowd-sourcing and other means until then. Requiring membership fees to fund the network's operational resources was also agreed as a means to ensure financial sustainability.

### Protection Priorities

Protection thematic working groups on the topics of legal frameworks, solutions and social cohesion were agreed. Participants agreed to consider common approaches on the topics to be discussed on regional and sub-regional levels. Furthermore, participants stressed the importance of looking at advocacy opportunities and common areas of work within the three main topics. The discussion further reaffirmed the commitment and interest of members to address issues related to the full cycle of displacement from prevention, to responses, to solutions.

The session took a deeper look at the three topics and assessed how each applies to each sub-regional context. Participants from North Africa noted that since all countries from the sub-region have ratified the 1951 Convention, they address issues related to legal frameworks on a regular basis making it a highly appropriate thematic priority for this particular context. In this regard, participants agreed that North Africa will focus on the legal frameworks priority. Civil society in the Middle East sub-region is heavily involved in work relating to supporting social cohesion and host communities, including community outreach and participation, among others. In this regard, it was agreed that the Middle East would be the most appropriate sub-region to address and coordinate the social cohesion theme. GCC participants expressed interest in exploring the solutions theme further.

## Next Steps



**For more information and access to all material related to MENA CSND please visit:**  
<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/q596mdfmxehmw/AABN48uM52tV6-AKWZzHEQEja?dl=0>

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