

Operationalizing Meaningful Refugee Participation (MRP) Guidelines

Refugees Seeking Equal Access at the Table (R-SEAT) works to co-design Refugee Advisory Mechanisms to harness the power of meaningful refugee participation and generate better refugee responses. Through this work, R-SEAT has debriefed refugee advisors to state delegations after their attendance to meetings of the global refugee system, including the Consultations on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways (CRCP) formerly known as Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement (ATCR), the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner Programme (ExCom), and the Global Refugee Forum (GRF) among others. We have also maintained close contact with state officials to understand the process of engaging refugee advisors in state delegations and learn from these experiences to improve them for future meetings. What has emerged from this process is a set of good practices and lessons learned to ensure that refugee participation is meaningful and that these convenings are substantive for both state officials and refugee delegates.

The following recommendations are designed to support state delegations in facilitating effective and meaningful engagement with refugee advisors. While not exhaustive, they serve as practical guidelines to enhance collaboration between state officials and refugee delegates.

Preparation Timeline for Mechanisms and Advisors

As a Mechanism, ideally six months before the global meetings with long preparative processes such as the GRF or one month before other events:

- **Anticipate State Communication:** Expect an official request from state counterparts to include a refugee advisor in their delegation for an upcoming event.
- **Identify Relevant Expertise:** Confirm with the state delegation if there are specific expertise or thematic areas that are desirable in the delegate to align with the states' priorities.
- **Connect with Academic Secretariat:** Seek advice from the academic secretariat to learn more about the meeting at hand as needed.
- **Collaborative Delegate Selection:** Work with state officials to select a delegate in accordance with the decision-making structures in the mechanism's governing documents.

Pre-Event Preparations for Selected Delegates:

- **Participate in Training:** Connect with R-SEAT to attend the Geneva Advocacy Training Program, ensuring readiness for the upcoming event. Leverage the relationship with the academic secretariat to fill in any gaps in knowledge.
- **Contribute to Delegation Statements:**
 - Follow the designated process to feed into the delegation's statement by coordinating with your state contact.
 - Draft your speaking points based on direction from the state counterpart.
- **Onboarding Preparation:** Make yourself available to be onboarded substantively. This means ensuring the following items are covered, and bringing them up with state counterparts if they are missed:
- **Agenda Review:** Review the event agenda, prioritizing sessions aligned with your expertise.
- **Clarify Expectations:** Ensure that the expectations of your role are clear and concrete.
- **Communication Role:** Act as a conduit to other members of the mechanism, keeping them informed of the event and its relevant preparations. Communicating this information will be your responsibility as the delegate.
- **Logistical Arrangements:** Sign any necessary participation agreements, prepare travel arrangements, and bring business cards for networking opportunities.

During the Event:

- **Speaking Engagements:** Practice for any speaking engagements, including delivering a portion of the delegation's plenary statement.
- **Prepare and Engage in Bilateral Meetings:** Ensure you are prepared for any bilateral meetings and stay in regular contact with state counterparts to ensure readiness for any scheduled meetings or events.
- **Frequent Check-Ins:** Touch base regularly to stay aligned on priority areas, requesting and offering support as needed.
- **Maximize Networking Opportunities:** Attend side events that may be relevant to your role and engage in networking to foster connections.

After the Event:

- **Delegation Debrief:** Participate in a debrief session with your delegation before departing.
- **Mechanism Debrief:** Convene a meeting with all mechanism members to debrief internally and share insights, lessons learned, and event highlights. Consider inviting the academic secretariat to attend and assist with any final submissions.
- **Submit Reports:** Finalize and submit any required reports or materials gathered about or from the event.

Preparation Timeline for State Counterparts

Ideally six months before the global meetings with long preparative processes such as the GRF or one month before other events:

- **Communicate Intent:** Inform the Refugee Advisory Mechanism of plans to include a refugee advisor and provide event details.
- **Specific Expertise Needs:** If there are particular priority areas or expertise that would be beneficial for this engagement, make recommendations to guide the advisor selection process.
- **Collaborative Selection:** Select the advisor in conjunction with the Refugee Advisory Mechanism according to the decision-making structures in relevant governing documents.
- **Identify Engagement Opportunities:** Determine any relevant side events or speaking engagements for the refugee advisor and guide early preparation.
- **Include Advisor in Plenary Statement:** Define the process for the refugee advisor to contribute substantially to drafting the delegation's plenary statement, ensuring their suggestions are considered.
- **Conduct Thorough Onboarding:**
 - Share the event agenda, highlighting priority sessions, giving the advisor the opportunity to provide their inputs.
 - Provide clear, concrete expectations for their role.
 - Finalize any participation agreements.
 - Arrange travel logistics.
 - Remunerate the advisor if they do not receive their regular income during the week of the fora or in preparation for it.

During the Event:

- **Support Speaking Engagements:** Work with the refugee advisor for any speaking engagements, including delivering part of the plenary statement.
- **Bilateral Meeting Participation:** Invite and prepare the advisor for bilateral meetings and other relevant events, maintaining regular communication. This is to include bilateral meetings between nation states and UNHCR officials.
- **Regular Check-Ins:** Maintain regular contact to support the advisor and stay aligned on priority areas.

After the Event:

- **Delegation Debrief:** Debrief as a delegation with the refugee advisor before members depart.
- **Gather Reports and Materials:** Collect any final reports or materials from the refugee advisor pertaining to the event.
- **Engage in Follow-Up:** Involve the refugee advisor and the Refugee Advisory Mechanism in the post-event review and reflection process to incorporate lessons learned.

These steps are designed to ensure thorough preparation and impactful engagement for refugee advisors. For an effective partnership, an accompanying guide is available to assist state counterparts in aligning roles and responsibilities with the Mechanism. By following these guidelines, Mechanisms can facilitate meaningful refugee participation, ensuring that advisors are well-prepared to represent refugee perspectives at high-stakes global meetings.