

R-SEAT statement

6 principles to guide any response to the needs of Ukrainian refugees

Earlier today, the UN's refugee agency, UNHCR, [reported](#) that some 660,000 refugees have fled Ukraine in less than a week. Yesterday, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, [reported](#) that UNHCR is planning for up to "4 million refugees in the coming days and weeks."

Our thoughts are with the Ukrainian people and with all those with family and friends in Ukraine.

As the international community mobilizes to respond to this rapidly evolving refugee situation, [Refugees Seeking Equal Access at the Table](#) (R-SEAT) calls on all parties to uphold **six key principles** when designing and implementing any response:

1. **Protection:** At the core of any refugee response must be a commitment to uphold fundamental principles of refugee protection, especially a commitment to the principle of *non-refoulement* –that no refugee shall be forcibly returned to a country where they fear persecution. As the European Union considers activating [Council Directive 2001/55/EC](#), known as the Temporary Protection Device, it is essential to ensure that any action is centered on both the short-term and long-term protection needs of refugees and their ability to access basic rights.
2. **Participation:** The planning for any long-term response to the needs of Ukrainian refugees must actively include the meaningful participation of Ukrainian refugees themselves. States and other actors must uphold the principle of participation, as articulated in Paragraph 34 of the 2018 [Global Compact on Refugees](#): "Responses are most effective when they actively and meaningfully engage those they are intended to protect and assist." For responses to be effective and legitimate, they must be developed with the meaningful participation of refugees themselves.
3. **International cooperation:** Tens of thousands of Ukrainian refugees are arriving in neighboring countries of Poland, Hungary, Moldova, Romanian and Slovakia. Local responses have been robust but must be actively and consciously supported by the international community. As noted in the Preamble to the [1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees](#), responding to the needs of refugees is a global issue and a "satisfactory solution" cannot be "achieved without international cooperation." Given the reluctance of many states in the region to host refugees in the past, this is an opportunity to clearly demonstrate the importance of international solidarity to ensure an effective response to the needs of refugees.
4. **Non-discrimination:** While the vast majority of individuals fleeing Ukraine are Ukrainian nationals, there are individuals of other nationalities who were in Ukraine on a temporary basis, including Afghan nationals who had fled in the midst of the fall of Afghanistan to the Taliban less than six months ago. All individuals in need of international protection who are fleeing Ukraine must be treated according to their need, not their nationality. As articulated in Article 3 of the [1951 Convention](#), the provisions of refugee protection shall be applied "without discrimination as to race, religion or country of origin."
5. **Additionality:** While the response to the needs of Ukrainian refugees must be robust, it must not come at the expense of the needs of other refugees. Responses to one situation must **not** come at the expense of responses to other situations. Instead, the response to the needs of displaced Ukrainians, both within Ukraine and as refugees in the region, should serve as a tangible reminder of the need for collective action in all refugee situations.
6. **Solutions:** While responding to the immediate needs of Ukrainian refugees, the international community must remember that the ultimate goal in any refugee situation is to find "[permanent solutions](#)." Humanitarian solutions alone are not sufficient. Almost 20 years ago, former UN High Commissioner for Refugees, [Sadako Ogata](#), stated that "there are no humanitarian solutions to humanitarian problems." Any response to refugees must include addressing the root causes of displacement and finding a permanent solution, however long that may take.

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