



Webinar on

**The Global Compact on Refugees:
Mapping the Way Forward for AALCO Member States**

Date: Wednesday, 24 May 2023

A. An Introduction to the Theme

On 17 December 2018, the United Nations General Assembly affirmed the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), after two years of extensive consultations led by UNHCR with Member States, International Organizations, refugees, civil society, the private sector, and experts.¹ The New York Declaration for Refugee and Migrants in 2016 through the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) laid the groundwork for the GCR.

The GCR was widely hailed as a creative and much-needed initiative to bolster the international refugee protection framework and respond effectively to large-scale refugee movements in light of contemporary challenges. To this extent, it sought to consolidate the edifice of existing international law standards including the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol while streamlining the notion of burden sharing. The compact seeks to make refugees self-reliant and in doing so enhance the protective shield of human rights that safeguards the lives and well-being of refugees by ensuring that they contribute the best to the host community. For these reasons, the GCR is also referred to as a ‘New Deal’ for refugees. The four key objectives of the GCR are as follows:²

- Ease the pressures on host countries
- Enhance refugee self-reliance

¹ The Global Compact on Refugees, UNHCR India Website. Accessed from <https://www.unhcr.org/the-global-compact-on-refugees.html> on 27 April 2022.

² *Supra* n. 1

- Expand access to third-country solutions
- Support conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity

The Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization (AALCO), over the years, has played an active role in discussing the roadmaps of a possible GCR. However, post the adoption of the GCR, AALCO is yet to comprehensively address this issue with its Member States and the Secretariat is of the view that the time is now ripe to engage the Afro-Asian community in addressing the key dimensions of the GCR. **In this regard, the AALCO Secretariat is conducting a Webinar on Wednesday, 24 May 2023 to address the GCR keeping in view the path ahead for AALCO Member States from an Afro-Asian perspective.**

B. AALCO's Prior Engagement with the Topic "Status and Treatment of Refugees"

The topic "Status and Treatment of Refugees" was placed on the agenda of AALCO in 1964 in pursuance to a recommendation made by the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt. Since then, the topic has been considered in detail by AALCO in several Annual Sessions and intersessional meetings including various capacity building initiatives. AALCO has over the years; worked closely with the UNHCR (including signing a Memorandum of Understanding on 23 May 2002). AALCO's "Principles on Status and Treatment of Refugees" elucidated at the Bangkok session in 1966 (also known as the 'Bangkok Principles') was a direct result of this collaboration. The Principles though non-binding in nature have in essence been put in practice by AALCO Member States in all matters pertaining to refugees and constitute the "core" of Afro-Asian engagement with international refugee protection. The Principles are universally recognized as a cornerstone of the international soft law legal framework for refugee protection and AALCO's efforts in this regard have been widely lauded.

The Bangkok Principles saw further refinement by the adoption of an addendum elaborating rights of refugees to return which was adopted at AALCO's Eleventh Session held in Accra in 1970. A second addendum elaborating the Principles on Burden Sharing was adopted at the Twenty Sixth Session in Bangkok in 1987. A Revised Text of the Bangkok Principles on Status and Treatment of Refugees was adopted at the New Delhi Annual Session of the Organization held in 2001.

In addition to the Bangkok Principles, AALCO to its credit has two other significant contributions in this domain: the preparation of a model legislation on refugees and the concept of safety zones both of which were well received by Member States.

As highlighted earlier, various capacity building initiatives (including with the UNHCR) including a Special Study on Statelessness have been initiated by AALCO in the past. It may be recalled that the last joint collaboration for a seminar between the two Organizations was on April 18-19, 2018 on the topic ‘Responding to Large Scale Refugee Movements’. With a long tradition of engaging with the topic of refugee protection, the AALCO Secretariat is of the view that the GCR and its implications for AALCO Member States is a relevant topic for deliberation for the Afro-Asian international legal community. The Webinar seeks to realize this objective in a fruitful and effective manner.

C. Structure of the Webinar

AALCO is organizing a **webinar** on the topic ‘**The Global Compact on Refugees: Mapping the Way Forward for AALCO Member States**’ on **Wednesday, 24 May 2023**. The webinar will be held in Online Mode (via Zoom Application) for AALCO Member States and other International Organizations.

Structure and Format of the Event

The webinar will begin by a **Keynote Address** delivered by **H.E. Dr. Kamalinne Pinitpuvadol**, Secretary-General of AALCO followed by a **Special Address** delivered by **Mr. Oscar Mundia**, Chief of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Mission in New Delhi. The focus of the inaugural session will be on the following theme: **Global Compact on Refugees: The Journey So Far and AALCO’s Engagement with Refugee Protection**.

Following the above, in two sessions, the panellists will each deliver 30-minutes presentations to be completed by short Q & A Sessions. The two sessions are as follows:

Session I: Global Compact on Refugees: Safety, Solutions and Solidarity

The first session will focus on the evolution of the GCR with a special emphasis on the relevance of GCR in light of contemporary challenges. The New York Declaration for Refugee and Migrants in 2016 especially the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) and its link with the GCR should be elaborated by International Refugee Law experts (including from the UNHCR) to set the stage for detailed discussions during the day.

This session will also focus on AALCO's Bangkok Principles of 1966 (revised in 2001) and its re-imagination in light of contemporary challenges. Discussion on the GCR in the context of the AALCO's Bangkok Principles and suggesting the way forward to address emerging challenges is expected to be a major takeaway from this session. The experts may address other relevant aspects within the theme, which they may deem necessary in their presentations.

Session II: Global Compact on Refugees: Building Protection Capacity

The second session will broadly examine the question of burden sharing which remains one of the most pressing challenges in International Refugee Law. The GCR has recognized this aspect and has focussed on this dimension to address concerns that arise in refugee protection. While UN Member States agreed to share responsibility with host countries, the practical modalities of this requirement pose unique challenges that require solutions tailored to different scenarios. In this regard, this session will seek to clarify one of the most fundamental dimension of GCR by looking at the compact through the lens of responsibility sharing with host countries. The experts may address other relevant aspects within the theme, which they may deem necessary in their presentations.

The proceedings of the Webinar will be recorded and published by the AALCO Secretariat in due course.

Registration

Please click on the link below to register your attendance.

<https://www.aalco.int/form/webinar-on-gcr>