

## Terms of Reference

### MIRPS Civil Society and Refugee-Led Organizations Dialogue Mechanism

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## 1. Background

The Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS) is a governmental cooperation framework composed of the Governments of Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, and Panama. Collectively, they seek to provide a coordinated response to forced displacement with a local, national, and regional approach, as a concrete implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees.

In 2019, the MIRPS Support Platform was established to leverage the support of the broadest possible range of States, financial institutions, regional organizations, and other stakeholders in order to contribute to the efforts of MIRPS countries.

Pursuant to the MIRPS Charter, adopted by Member States during the Annual Meeting held in Panama City in January 2024, MIRPS is led by a Pro Tempore Presidency and supported by a Technical Secretariat, composed of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Organization of American States (OAS), through its Department of Access to Rights.

The Charter formalized the establishment of three dialogue mechanisms with non-governmental actors in order to broaden the voices of key civil society stakeholders and sectors of interest, thereby enriching dialogue spaces for the development of actions that contribute to a positive impact on the lives of persons who have been forcibly displaced. In this context, these Terms of Reference of the MIRPS Civil Society and Refugee-Led Organizations Dialogue Mechanism (hereinafter, “the Mechanism”) aim to clearly establish its structure, functions, and operational procedures.

It is essential to consider and formalize the participation of a greater number of non-governmental actors, such as civil society and refugee-led organizations, to collaborate as agents of action and spokespersons for the challenges, vulnerabilities, and risks faced by displaced persons. This Mechanism brings together civil society organizations and refugee-led organizations (CSO-RLOs) from MIRPS countries to accompany the implementation of the action plans.

## 2. Purpose

Pursuant to Article Thirty-Four of the MIRPS Charter, the Mechanism’s primary objective is to facilitate communication between States and non-governmental organizations, including refugee-led organizations. This dialogue seeks to inform the adoption of actions that contribute to strengthening the National Action Plans and the MIRPS Regional Action Plan.

To achieve this purpose, the following four objectives are established:

- *To present*, in all MIRPS dialogue spaces, positions on areas of opportunity identified by the Mechanism, so that they may serve as advocacy tools for the fulfillment of States’ commitments.
- *To participate in and support* regional mechanisms of solidarity and responsibility-sharing in the region through the promotion of dialogue.
- *To foster* joint analysis of the situation and humanitarian responses.
- *To propose and implement* innovative and comprehensive solutions for the National Action Plans, the Regional Technical Teams, and the Annual Work Plan.

### **3. Structure and Responsibilities**

#### **3.1. Member Organizations of the Mechanism**

The member organizations of the Mechanism are non-governmental organizations and refugee-led organizations based in MIRPS Member States that share a commitment to the objectives of MIRPS, particularly with regard to protection, assistance, and the pursuit of durable solutions.

These organizations must have demonstrated experience in providing services to and accompanying refugees, asylum-seekers, beneficiaries of complementary protection, internally displaced persons, stateless persons, and/or returnees with protection needs. They must also demonstrate a willingness to actively participate in the activities of the Mechanism, respect the principles established in the MIRPS Charter, and contribute, from a civil society perspective, to the achievement of MIRPS' common objectives.

#### **3.2. General Assembly**

The General Assembly is the supreme decision-making body of the Dialogue Mechanism and is composed of representatives of the registered CSOs and RLOs that are members of the Mechanism. The General Assembly shall exercise the following functions:

- Approve and amend the Mechanism's objectives, policies, and strategies.
- Review, propose adjustments to, and approve the annual lines of work submitted by the Regional Coordination.
- Elect the Mechanism's Regional Coordination.
- Approve the admission of new members to the Mechanism.
- Endorse the Mechanism's positions for the Annual Meeting and other MIRPS high-level spaces, as well as the corresponding chapter of the MIRPS Annual Report.
- Approve any product, proposal, or document developed within the framework of the Mechanism prior to its dissemination or formal adoption.
- Oversee and assess the achievement of the Mechanism's objectives, the implementation of its Annual Work Plan, and the accountability of its representatives.
- Discuss and approve amendments to the Mechanism's Terms of Reference.
- Develop and propose new activities in line with the work plan for the corresponding year.
- Perform any other functions as determined by the General Assembly.

##### **3.2.1. Participation in Forums and Dialogue Spaces**

Any member of the Assembly may nominate themselves to participate in forums, coordination meetings with governments, or regional platforms, when invitations are addressed to the Mechanism, provided that they meet the following criteria:

- Actively engage in the activities carried out by the working group to which they are affiliated.
- Demonstrate commitment and leadership by assuming responsibilities and following up on actions that contribute to the implementation of the Mechanism's Annual Work Plan.
- Possess experience and substantive knowledge relevant to the main thematic areas addressed in coordination and dialogue spaces with multiple stakeholders.
- Have the capacity to systematize good practices and propose innovative solutions in the forums or spaces in which they participate.

In addition, participation by organizations shall be balanced and representative, taking into account the representation of the countries that comprise the Mechanism.

### 3.3. Regional Coordination

A member organization of the Mechanism shall serve as the Regional Coordination of the Dialogue Mechanism of Civil Society Organizations and Refugee-Led Organizations, in order to ensure the achievement of its strategic objectives and accountability to its members. In addition, it shall be responsible for proposing and leading representation on behalf of the Mechanism in other forums, initiatives, or high-level meetings. The mandate of the Regional Coordination shall be one year, and its designation shall be decided through elections.

The following functions are entrusted to the Regional Coordination:

- Design and implement the Annual Work Plan, subject to prior approval by the Assembly.
- Propose activities and deliverables, in coordination with the Assembly, as well as other documentation aligned with the objectives of the Mechanism.
- Submit quarterly reports to the Assembly on progress in the implementation of the Work Plan and participation in institutional spaces, for the purpose of accountability to the members of the Mechanism.
- Convene and chair the Mechanism's regular meetings, as well as meetings with the leaders of the working groups.
- Coordinate the progress of the working groups, in close collaboration with their respective leaders.
- Serve as the focal point for communication between the Mechanism and the MIRPS Technical Secretariat, as well as among the members of the Mechanism.
- Receive and submit membership applications for consideration and approval by the members.
- Contribute to the drafting of the Mechanism's statements and positions for official MIRPS meetings.
- Contribute to the development of the chapter on the Mechanism's work in the MIRPS Annual Report.
- Inform member organizations of participation in meetings throughout the year and notify the Assembly in cases of member inactivity.
- Maintain and update the registry of organizations that comprise the Mechanism, as well as those participating in the Working Groups.
- Safeguard and manage all information generated during the year of its mandate.
- Prepare a handover report for the incoming Regional Coordination and the MIRPS Technical Secretariat, detailing achievements, pending activities, and priority issues. At the end of its mandate, it shall also transfer relevant account access and documentation to the organization assuming the Regional Coordination for the incoming term.
- Perform any other functions that may be assigned by the General Assembly.

The organization holding the Regional Coordination shall carry out its functions with the support of the MIRPS Technical Secretariat.

In addition, the Technical Secretariat shall facilitate the coordination of the Mechanism's activities with the MIRPS Pro Tempore Presidency, Member States, and the Support Platform.

#### 3.3.1. Election of the Mechanism's Regional Coordination

The Regional Coordination shall be renewed annually through an election process convened and organized by the outgoing Regional Coordination. Organizations wishing to stand for this role must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- Be a member of the Mechanism.
- Have at least five full-time staff members and/or demonstrate institutional capacity through active participation in other national and/or regional mechanisms whose main areas of work include protection, socio-economic integration, and engagement with local governments.
- Have a minimum of three (3) years of legal existence as a non-governmental

organization in its country of registration.

- Where feasible, be based in the same State as the MIRPS Pro Tempore Presidency.

In addition, applicant organizations shall submit a proposal including:

- A letter of motivation, demonstrating the alignment of the organization's mandate and activities with the objectives of MIRPS and the Mechanism.
- A proposed action plan for the term, which will serve as the basis for the collaborative development of the Annual Work Plan (see section 3.2, General Assembly).

### **3.4. Working Groups**

In line with the MIRPS Regional Technical Teams established under the MIRPS Charter, and according to the areas of work of the organizations that are part of the Mechanism, Working Groups shall be organized. Extraordinary working groups may also be established during the year, should a specific situation or context so require, subject to prior agreement by the members. All members may participate in the groups to which they choose to commit. Each group shall be led by a Group Leader, selected annually on a voluntary basis. Group leadership shall be renewed each year. However, if the current leader wishes to continue and no other member puts themselves forward, the leader may remain in the role for a maximum of one additional term. All members are eligible to serve as Group Leaders, with the sole exception of the current Regional Coordination, which may not assume this role.

The Mechanism shall operate through the following Working Groups:

- Process
- Internal Displacement
- Training and livelihoods
- Local Governance

The following functions are entrusted to the Working Groups:

- Design an annual work plan and share progress with the General Assembly.
- Meet on a regular basis and implement their work plan.
- Submit a written report on their performance and results at the end of the year.
- Actively contribute to the implementation of the Annual Work Plan by submitting proposals to the Regional Coordination aimed at achieving agreed objectives.

Likewise, Group Leaders shall be responsible for:

- Coordinating the work of the Working Group.
- Organizing and convening regular Working Group meetings.
- Preparing the agenda for each session.
- Keeping attendance records for each meeting.
- Drafting minutes of Working Group meetings.
- Participating in meetings with Working Group Leaders and the Regional Coordination.
- Reviewing the Working Group's inputs and submitting them to the Regional Coordination.
- Maintaining regular communication and coordination with the Regional Coordination.
- Submitting a final written report to the Regional Coordination on the Group's annual performance.

## **4. Operational Modalities**

The Mechanism shall operate through virtual meetings. The official channel of communication between meetings shall be email. As a secondary channel, a WhatsApp group shall be established for operational and coordination purposes among the members of the Mechanism. This group shall be administered by the acting Regional Coordination and shall be validated annually upon each change of mandate.

- The General Assembly shall meet on a quarterly basis.
- Each Working Group shall determine the number of sessions per year, in accordance

with the Annual Work Plan.

- Working Group Leaders shall meet at least monthly.
- Decisions shall be taken by the General Assembly through voting at the quarterly meetings, with one vote per organization.
- Quorum shall be constituted when at least one half plus one of the members included in the most recent membership list are present.

#### **4.1. Decision-making Procedures**

4.1.1 Members of the Mechanism shall follow the procedure below for decision-making:

- The representatives of the Mechanism shall agree on the nature, scope, target audience, and timeframe for the implementation of each decision or agreement.
- Votes shall initially be conducted during a duly convened Assembly meeting for that purpose; however, in the absence of quorum, the voting process may be extended through an electronic form in order to reach broader consensus.
- For general decisions requiring members' endorsement, draft texts shall be prepared and circulated among the Working Groups to collect comments and proposed revisions. The Working Group Leader shall consolidate the inputs into a final version and submit it to the Regional Coordination.
- Once the final draft is agreed upon, the visual identity of the Mechanism shall be incorporated using the same graphic standards.
- Approval of documents related to the routine functioning of the Mechanism and not affecting substantive matters shall be by simple majority. More complex decisions, such as amendments to the Terms of Reference, shall require unanimity. In duly justified exceptional cases, such decisions may be adopted by majority vote. In such cases, a letter shall be submitted to the Technical Secretariat indicating the voting results and the justification for not proceeding by unanimity.

4.1.2 Procedure for the establishment of extraordinary working groups:

- The proposing organization shall submit a formal request to the Regional Coordination justifying the establishment of an Extraordinary Working Group, specifying its nature, scope, feasibility, and duration.
- The Regional Coordination shall convene a meeting to vote on the establishment of the Working Group. In the absence of quorum, voting shall be conducted through an electronic form.
- A Group Leader shall be identified to follow up on the matter concerned.
- Upon approval, the Extraordinary Working Group shall be formally established.
- The Regional Coordination shall send a confirmation email to all members of the Mechanism and the Technical Secretariat.

#### **4.2. Participation in the MIRPS Annual Meeting and other MIRPS high-level spaces**

Through its Regional Coordination, the Mechanism may be granted a participation space in the MIRPS Annual Meeting, as well as in other MIRPS high-level spaces, for the purpose of presenting its main contributions and recommendations regarding progress, challenges, and priorities in the areas of protection and solutions, as well as reporting on actions that contribute to strengthening the MIRPS National and Regional Action Plans.

## 5. Membership

### 5.1. Admission Procedure

Civil society organizations and refugee-led organizations with operations in the region covered by the scope of action of MIRPS may apply for membership in the Mechanism. To be admitted, applicant organizations shall meet the following requirements:

- Be a civil society organization or a refugee-led organization based in one of the MIRPS countries.
- Implement programmes benefiting persons in situations of forced displacement.
- Have a vision and mission aligned with the objectives of MIRPS.
- Designate a permanent focal point within the organization to serve as its representative to the Mechanism.
- Be committed to the principles of non-discrimination, gender equality, participation, and respect for human rights. To this end, the organization shall submit evidence demonstrating training, experience, or actions related to these principles. Where sufficient evidence is not available, the organization shall commit to undertaking, within a reasonable timeframe, a capacity-building course recommended by the Regional Coordination or the Technical Secretariat, such as training on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) or protection-related training, as part of its institutional strengthening process.

The call for new members shall be launched during the first quarter of the Regional Coordination's term. In duly justified exceptional cases, the call may be issued outside the first quarter. The call may also be shared with the National Technical Teams, so that they may suggest the invitation of organizations already involved in the implementation of the MIRPS National Action Plans.

Upon completion of the process, the Mechanism's membership registry shall be updated and notified by the Technical Secretariat to the MIRPS Member States.

To apply for admission, an organization shall complete an application form hosted on a server managed by the Technical Secretariat and shall complete and sign a letter of commitment to membership. Subsequently, the organization shall submit a letter of endorsement from a member organization of the Mechanism or from another organization or institution with a recognized track record supporting the application. This letter shall be sent to the email address of the Regional Coordination.

The Regional Coordination shall be responsible for reviewing compliance with the established requirements by organizations seeking to join the Mechanism. For this purpose, a score-based evaluation tool shall be used to objectively verify the level of compliance. The results of the evaluation shall be presented to the Assembly at its next ordinary meeting, where the approval or rejection of the applicant organization shall be put to a vote.

Following approval by the General Assembly, the applicant organization shall be sent these Terms of Reference and a form to collect key organizational information and the designation of a focal point as representative to the Mechanism. Upon receipt of the completed form, the Regional Coordination shall follow up by providing the new member with access to the Mechanism's relevant documentation. A virtual meeting shall then be organized between the Regional Coordination and the new member to clarify any questions and formally confirm membership. During the same meeting, the new member shall select the Working Group in which it wishes to participate, which shall be ratified through a letter of commitment. The new member shall thereafter be added to the membership registry.

Upon completion of this procedure, the Regional Coordination shall notify the MIRPS Technical Secretariat of the incorporation of the new member. In turn, the MIRPS Technical Secretariat

shall inform the MIRPS Pro Tempore Presidency and the Member State in which the organization is based of the new admission.

## **5.2. Rights and Obligations**

All members of the Mechanism shall have the following rights:

- To have the nature and character of their organization respected.
- To propose activities or discussion topics of interest to the Mechanism and its work agenda.
- To submit proposals aimed at improving the functioning and substance of the work carried out under the framework of the Mechanism.
- To receive general information to which the Mechanism has access.
- To be notified in advance of activities organized by the Mechanism.
- To be invited to ordinary meetings, assemblies, and Working Group activities.
- To propose to the Assembly the establishment of a Working Group or commission.
- To receive information related to MIRPS.
- To be convened to MIRPS meetings, when required.
- To have their organization reflected on the MIRPS website.

All members of the Mechanism shall observe the following obligations:

- To respect the fundamental principles and rules of the Mechanism.
- To participate in all ordinary and extraordinary meetings, as well as in other scheduled activities.
- To participate, when nominated, in Working Groups or commissions.
- To share and disseminate information that may be of interest to other members.
- To comply with the agreements and commitments undertaken during member meetings, assemblies, or within the Working Group to which they belong.
- To keep the Working Group and the Regional Coordination informed of updated institutional contact information (address, name of representative, telephone number, and institutional email).

## **5.3. Requirements for engagement in the work of the Mechanism**

A member shall be considered active when it:

- Attends at least 80 per cent of the General Assembly meetings each year.
- Belongs to a Working Group and participates in at least 70 per cent of its meetings annually.
- Demonstrates compliance with the responsibilities and obligations set out in these Terms of Reference.

An organization shall lose its membership status if it fails to meet the above criteria. In such cases, the Regional Coordination shall issue a formal communication notifying the withdrawal of membership, without prejudice to the organization's right to reapply in accordance with the established admission procedure.

## **6. Amendment of the Terms of Reference**

All members of the Mechanism shall have the right to propose amendments to these Terms of Reference. Any proposal shall be submitted in writing to the Regional Coordination, which shall facilitate a space for its presentation at the first subsequent meeting of the General Assembly.

The vote to approve or reject the proposal shall take place at the second subsequent meeting of the General Assembly. The decision shall be adopted by unanimity, as established (see Section 4.1.1, fifth paragraph).

Between meetings, the Regional Coordination shall transmit the proposal to the Technical Secretariat for its observations. In addition, members of the Mechanism may submit written comments on the proposal to the Regional Coordination.