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UNHCR concerned about proposed changes to Danish Aliens Act

The United Nations Refugee Agency has taken note of the proposed changes to the Danish Aliens Act, especially as they relate to resettlement policy and quota refugees. In this context, UNHCR wishes to draw attention to the following:

UNHCR is deeply concerned about the emphasis in the Danish proposal on the “integration potential” of resettled refugees. The term “integration potential” seems to emphasize immigration criteria rather than protection needs when it comes to selecting refugees for resettlement.

Resettlement, under the auspices of UNHCR, is first and foremost a protection tool. It is designed to benefit the most vulnerable cases among the world’s refugee population. However, because there is only a limited number of countries that take quota refugees, it remains a solution for only a small number of refugees. But for many, resettlement may be the only solution!

When a resettlement country starts to emphasize immigration criteria rather than the protection needs of refugees, it thereby limits the availability of resettlement for those most in need of it.

Resettlement countries usually claim that they want to take “real refugees” and not economic migrants. The introduction of the “integration potential” criterion seriously calls into question this claim.

Moreover, the introduction of the “integration potential” criterion in national resettlement programmes could directly undermine UNHCR’s efforts to further develop the resettlement concept for the benefit of the world’s most vulnerable refugees, and it sets a negative precedent for other potential resettlement countries.

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