

NGO statement on Agenda item 1 on Organisational Arrangements

Dear Chair,

This statement has been drafted through a wide consultation with NGOs and attempts to reflect the diversity of views within the NGO community.

As mentioned on several occasions, NGOs see the first Global Refugee Forum (GRF) as a crucial milestone to translate the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) into concrete actions, and we are all committed to work towards making the Forum a success.

With regard to organisational arrangements, we greatly appreciate that since the last preparatory meeting, UNHCR has provided significant amount of additional information and clarifications regarding the organisation and preparations of the Forum. This is very helpful to reach a shared understanding of the scope of the event, and how we can all contribute to it to make it a success. With this additional information in hand and following a series of informal conversations with various stakeholders, we have some recommendations on a number of issues.

On the pledges and contributions:

The guidance note on the development of pledges and contributions and good practices is a helpful document. We particularly commend the emphasis on age, gender, disability, and diversity considerations and call on all actors to fully and visibly integrate these in all pledges and contributions. In keeping with the specific commitments outlined in the GCR and supported by UNHCR's five Commitments to Refugee Women¹, this should include a particular focus on the needs and rights of refugee women and girls.

We have already mentioned the following point numerous times, but would like to reiterate it because of its critical importance. Pledges must be *matching* collectively identified needs, gaps and opportunities in *existing* refugee situations so that they lead to concrete changes in the lives of refugees and host communities. We have also strongly encouraged national preparations as the only way to ensure that pledges and contributions made at the Forum will match the priorities of hosting countries, are owned by national stakeholders and are accountable to the affected populations.

In some national contexts, UNHCR has taken the initiative of convening consultative meetings with a number of key stakeholders involved in refugee responses, with the view of initiating discussions on possible pledges and contributions for the Global Refugee Forum. This is a welcomed step and we hope that such national consultations can result in the identification of priority needs, gaps and opportunities. We also hope that the outcomes of the national consultations will be taken forward and discussed further by the co-sponsors of each area of focus.

We are fully supportive of the primary objective of the Forum which is to mobilise new and specific pledges and contributions. Repackaged commitments, pledges and contributions should be the exception at the Forum. Commitments on policy should represent a departure from the *status quo*. Financial and other material pledges should represent additionality. Real advances in international responses to refugee protection will only be achieved if we commit to *change*.

On co-sponsorship:

¹ UNHCR's Commitments to Refugee Women, 12 December 2001, available in Annex 2 of the UNHCR Policy on Age, Gender and Diversity, 8 March 2018, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5bb628ea4.html>

The appointment of the focal points for each area of focus is a very welcomed step. The presentations made on each areas of focus gave greater clarity on their vision and scope. We are eagerly waiting for the focal points to arrange the first meetings of co-sponsors as soon as possible so that many of the details regarding building of pledges, sharing of good practices and arrangements for the Forum can be discussed further.

The co-sponsorship groups are envisaged as a platform for the *contributors*, and for contributors only, whether this is for pledges and contributions or for showcasing good practices. We are concerned that in the current format, the groups do not offer a space for stakeholders to express and showcase their specific needs and gaps (thematic or geographical) and encourage pledges and contributions which could match these needs.

We are worried that this disconnect will lead to pledges and contributions which will not address existing needs and gaps. We strongly encourage UNHCR to consider this aspect and find ways to address this gap.

On refugee participation:

Many NGOs have stressed the importance of promoting meaningful participation of refugees in the preparations for the Forum and at the Forum itself. Refugees, both resettled refugees and refugees in countries of refuge, and refugee-hosting communities must speak for themselves and play a key role in determining which policies and programmes are prioritised at all levels, as well as decisions on processes, systems, financing and implementation of policies. Participation of representatives of refugee groups and host communities such as Refugee Welfare Committees should be facilitated as they will be able to give first hand information on issues that affect them. In keeping with the commitments outlined in the GCR it is imperative that equal number of refugee women and refugee men are included as well as young people, representatives of disability organisations and the LGBTQI communities.

We have heard that several Member States are considering including refugees and youth in their delegations. We strongly encourage *all* Member States to consider inviting refugees as part of their delegation at the Forum. In addition, we encourage Member States to support financially and otherwise refugee-led networks that are preparing for the GRF at the regional and global level. Finally, co-sponsors should maintain regular coordination with these initiatives to enable them to assess, inform or contribute to the thematic pledges and contributions.

On the tracking system to monitor pledges:

We have expressed already our concern that pledges may be left unchecked after the Forum.

While we do not want to discourage good pledges and contributions with a burdensome accountability mechanism, we also stress the crucial importance of having a tracking system that is structured around focus areas *and* connected with the GCR objectives, outcomes and indicators. Unless the GRF pledging process quickly aligns with the GCR monitoring system, we risk seeing a plethora of pledges that will be impossible to track. We also believe that a tracking system can contribute to supporting States and other stakeholders in fulfilling their commitments made at the Forum.

We hear the call for a simple monitoring system that does not lose track of the overall goal of the GCR which is to strengthen responsibility-sharing.

In this regard, we urge to establish a credible and age, gender and diversity sensitive accountability framework to track GRF pledges and contributions. Stakeholders should be held accountable to outcomes, rather than outputs, for refugees and their hosts. Furthermore, we recommend finalizing the accountability framework prior to the Forum. While we recognize that the development of indicators is an ‘iterative process’, major revisions in the framework after the Forum would jeopardise the credibility of the overall GCR monitoring by continually changing the goalposts and the related baselines.

NGOs look forward to continuing a fruitful exchange towards the preparations of the Forum. We stand committed to make this event a success.

Thank you.