

THIRD PREPARATORY MEETING
FOR THE GLOBAL REFUGEE FORUM 2019
14 November 2019

**NGO statement on Agenda item 1: preparation of pledges and contributions for the
Global Refugee Forum**

Dear Chair,

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

As we embark upon the final preparations for the first Global Refugee Forum (GRF), we wish to highlight six over-arching priorities so that the High-Level Forum delivers tangible contributions to the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) and sets an ambitious standard for future refugee response: 1) sharing the responsibility for helping refugees and host communities more equitably and predictably; 2) holding ourselves and other GRF stakeholders accountable for progress; 3) supporting the meaningful participation of refugees and affected communities – with a particular focus on women’s participation; 4) strengthening protection of persons of concern; 5) facilitating a “multi-stakeholder and partnership approach” that encourages broader collaboration and effective coordination among more diverse stakeholders; and 6) delivering tangible solutions to improve refugees’ situations and end their displacement.

NGOs have actively participated in all the co-sponsoring groups established by UNHCR to advance GRF priority themes and have been active in their respective national contexts. We take note of the evolution of the co-sponsoring groups and call for clearer modalities to coordinate support and advocacy to mobilize pledges and good practices in the coming weeks. In this regard, we have listed examples of our pledges and contributions to the GRF in an Annex to this document, which will be updated on a rolling basis until the Forum. We encourage all stakeholders to consult this annex and reach out to NGOs for further details and to establish joint and matching pledges. We also call on all stakeholders to replicate this level of transparency around pledges and good practices. This adds to NGO commitments made among the over 350 pledges at the recent ExCom High-Level Segment on Statelessness, which will be integrated and monitored under the GCR.

Progress towards **equitable and predictable responsibility-sharing** has however been limited. While we applaud the launch of three regional Support Platforms in Latin America, the East and Horn of Africa, and for the Afghan situation, we are still awaiting clear indications of additional, predictable and flexible funding in support of refugees and their hosts. With global displacement numbers now at their highest point ever recorded, it is essential that the international community commits the necessary funds to support refugees and host communities. Beyond funding, tangible actions including resettlement and other safe and legal routes for refugees should be encouraged, especially from the ‘missing middle’ States which have, so far, underutilised their capacity to assist refugees. We also note the lack of concrete initiatives to address the root causes of forced displacement. To the contrary, we are concerned by the resurgence of conflicts, persecutions and other factors leading to displacement, including from Syria, Venezuela, Myanmar, and in other situations.

With regard to accountability, we again call on UNHCR to take into account NGOs' inputs in finalising the GCR indicators. We find that the current version of the GCR indicators would greatly benefit from a sharper focus on refugee protection and self-reliance, and stronger alignment to the SDG targets and indicators. In this regard, we call on Member States to include refugees in their SDG Voluntary National Reviews and/or locally relevant and accountable National Development Plans as a way to complement the GCR monitoring framework. Committing to include refugees in the SDG follow-up and review process would strengthen the linkages between the GCR and the SDG agenda and help fulfill the promise of greater refugee self-reliance and support to host communities inherent in the GCR. In addition, we would emphasize the need for disaggregated data and recommend that individual rights of those affected by displacement are also tracked as part of the GCR indicators framework. Only when rights of affected people are upheld, are protection and solutions possible in a dignified way.

The meaningful participation of refugees and other affected people must be embedded within the final GRF preparations, its results and the operationalization of the GCR. We are encouraged to see opportunities arising for refugee representation in spotlight sessions and high-level panels at the GRF. We also call for more details on how refugees, stateless people and host community representatives can actively co-design GRF pledges at country and global levels, particularly often marginalized groups such as women and girls, youth, elders, people with disability, and LGBTIQ people. Further engagement is also necessary to mitigate the various barriers that hinder the participation and effective consultation of refugees, in particular of the most underrepresented groups. Participation could include the use of video conferencing and other opportunities for remote engagement to include refugees unable to travel. We are keen to know the measures through which the intersection of age, gender, disability and other forms of diversity are taken into consideration to ensure that all related processes and strategies are carried out in an inclusive, accessible, sustained and transparent manner for all refugees. To ensure long-lasting improvements and to build trust and accountability with refugee participants, UNHCR should pledge to evaluate how refugee contributions were incorporated into the planning and outcomes of the GRF. This can form the basis for dialogue and engagement on planning for the next GRF in four years, as well as at high-level refugee meetings in the interim.

We welcome the widespread interest in supporting the **protection capacity** of host countries, including the importance of access to and provision of legal aid services for refugees, in pursuit of the protection of their rights. We call on States and other stakeholders to ensure that legal aid services are an integral part of building protection capacity and systems. We particularly support the impending launch of the Asylum Capacity Support Group as a welcome opportunity to create strong partnerships with NGOs and legal practitioners to strengthen the fairness, efficiency and effectiveness of national asylum procedures, including through access to legal aid. We also support cross-cutting multi-stakeholder initiatives designed to provide practical tools for the development of age, gender and diversity-responsive pledges.

Many useful tools, pledging guidance, frameworks and identification of areas of needs have been developed through the co-sponsorship groups. With less than five weeks to the Forum, we urgently need to use these to collectively mobilize and encourage meaningful pledges and contributions at national and regional level. At the same time, we have yet to see significant contributions to the protection of refugees and vulnerable segments in their host communities.

UNHCR should encourage States to apply age, gender and diversity considerations to ensure inclusive access to social protection programmes.

A key principle to emerge from the New York Declaration, the GCR and the Global Compact on Migration (GCM), is the importance of adopting a “**multi-stakeholder and partnership**” or “whole-of-society” approach in order for responses to be effective and based on shared humanitarian standards. To deliver on this principle, the GRF must promote strengthened and sustainable collaboration and coordination between diverse actors, including refugees themselves, host communities, mandated leads and lead agencies within the UN system, relevant ministries and agencies across tiers of government, NGOs and other actors as set out within the GCR.

Lastly, we take note of positive indications from several Member States with regard to **durable solutions** for refugees. Developing the Three-Year Strategy on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways is a particularly positive step in support of the GCR implementation and responsibility-sharing. We hope new Member States will come forward with additional quality resettlement places, complementary pathways and community sponsorships. To this end, we call on UNHCR to quickly release the related Global Action Plan. Moreover, for the Three-Year Strategy to reach its targets, ensuring continued momentum is critical. While the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement (ATCR) are an excellent mechanism to do this, a once-a-year meeting is not enough. We therefore urge UNHCR and States to consider more frequent multi-stakeholder gatherings on this issue, for example as an off-spring of the co-sponsorship group on Solutions.

More broadly speaking, we would like to see more cohesive, long-term contributions to refugees and their hosts through the promotion of stronger synergies between solutions, protection capacity, education, jobs and livelihoods, energy and infrastructure. Only by taking a more comprehensive approach to overlapping initiatives can we hope to achieve the major GCR objective of refugee self-reliance.

We thank UNHCR for giving us the opportunity to participate in GRF preparations and look forward to engaging further with other stakeholders towards a successful Global Refugee Forum and beyond.

Thank you.