Thank you, Chair.

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

NGOs would like to begin by recognizing the commendable efforts made by African governments over the past year in working towards solutions for displaced persons. The longer version of our statement lists several positive developments. Yet, despite notable progress in the past year, significant challenges remain. Humanitarian space is shrinking, new threats continue to emerge on the continent, and ongoing violence has prevented many displaced persons from returning to their countries and areas of origin. Refugees and IDPs from Burundi, Somalia, the Central African Republic, Mali, and elsewhere have continued to face barriers caused by ongoing hostilities. Access constraints have, in many places, led to inconsistent and uneven support for displaced persons living outside of capitals and easily accessible areas. Humanitarians, governments, and UNHCR, should work together to find creative solutions that enable more systematic support to all persons in need.

We would now like to highlight comments on particular country-specific developments in the region:

**In Burundi:**

NGOs are concerned with the continuing deterioration of the situation in Burundi, and the increasing reports of serious human rights violations, including those of torture and extra-judicial killings. NGOs welcome efforts to scale up humanitarian response in Burundi and would highlight the need for a substantial increase in protection capacity in the country.

**In the Central African Republic:**

Turning to the CAR, in order to provide the most effective humanitarian assistance to the population there, NGOs encourage UNHCR to provide greater information about the needs of displaced persons in remote areas, camps, and enclaves, as well as ensure that its project proposals are based on comprehensive needs assessments and gap analyses.
In the Democratic Republic of the Congo:

Despite significant investment in peace and stability initiatives, the DRC remains in protracted crisis. NGOs are particularly concerned with the sudden closure of the Mukoto IDP camp and the forced eviction of its more than 4,000 residents. We encourage UNHCR to support the government in fulfilling its commitments under the Kampala Convention and in ensuring that there is proper planning and management of any further camp closures. With refugee arrivals from the CAR and Burundi likely to increase, NGOs urge UNHCR in the DRC to prioritize consistent and transparent communication with the refugees themselves, affected communities, and partners in determining the most effective means for addressing their protection and assistance needs.

In Ethiopia:

NGOs commend Ethiopia for its open-door policy on accepting refugees. The country currently hosts more than 730,000 refugees from South Sudan, Eritrea, Somalia, Kenya, Burundi, Congo, Yemen, and Sudan, among others. We recognize the challenges that accompany such a commitment, and support the High Commissioner’s call for increased assistance to Ethiopia in providing for this population.

In Kenya:

The Ministerial Pledging Conference on Somali Refugees held in October in Brussels fell short of its fundraising goal for the Voluntary Returns Programme of Somalia Refugees living in Kenya. According to UNHCR, 8,000 refugees have so far, chosen to return. When put in the context of the more than 430,000 Somali refugees hosted by Kenya, this figure suggests that there needs to be a review of the conditions of the Tripartite Agreement, which must account not only safe and voluntary returns but should also provide for the integration of refugees in Kenya.

In Mali:

Renewed violence in April and May 2015 increased the number of displaced in Mali, but positive signs were evident towards the end of the year, when voluntary returns began to increase. Recognizing the ongoing needs for protection and assistance, we encourage UNHCR to allow greater flexibility in funding agreements with implementing partners in order to deliver assistance in a safe and responsible way. NGOs applaud the Government’s commitment to durable solutions, and call for the necessary resources to be allocated to ensure the effective ongoing implementation of the national durable solutions strategy.
In Nigeria:

NGOs are increasingly concerned about the protection crisis in Northeastern Nigeria. NGOs urge UNHCR to increase its presence in North East Nigeria to ensure improved protection support on the ground. Moreover, we encourage UNHCR to take a stronger leadership position in addressing the serious protection issues facing the Nigerian population, from forced relocations, to militarization of IDP settlements, to violations of the principle of non-refoulement, among others. We are happy to discuss this further during Wednesday’s side event.

In Somalia:

With the Somalia New Deal ending in 2016, the conceptualization of the National Development Plan is now in progress. This plan is a significant opportunity to elaborate a path towards durable solutions for the more than 1 million IDPs within the country. NGOs are concerned with ongoing protection violations but are encouraged by the Somali government’s and UNHCR’s efforts to address these concerns and look forward to concrete outcomes from the initiatives being put in place.

In South Sudan:

NGOs are concerned that the peace agreement that was signed in South Sudan in August has stalled. Also, NGOs are also deeply concerned about the South Sudan NGO Bill, which was signed in early February this year. In its current form, the Bill creates a prohibitive operating environment for NGOs and will likely inhibit the delivery of services to those persons most in need. NGOs urge the Government of the Republic of South Sudan to ensure that the Bill is submitted to a process of public consultation following the formation of the Transitional Government of National Unity.

A longer version of this statement can be found at www.icvanetwork.org.

Thank you Chair.