Mr. Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We would like to draw the Standing Committee’s attention to five areas for follow-up regarding the UNHCR Executive Committee’s two draft Conclusions.

Regarding the Conclusion on International Cooperation from a Protection and Solutions Perspective:

First, NGOs would like to affirm the need for greater international cooperation and expansion of solutions for refugees, IDPs and stateless persons. Civil society would like to also stress the need for **affected populations to be directly engaged** as key stakeholders and partners in the pursuit of solutions. Solutions that disregard the perspectives of refugees, IDPs and stateless person’s risk being unsustainable and ineffective. Civil society groups are willing and able to provide key support in engaging affected populations.

Second, with regards to the emphasis in the Conclusion on voluntary repatriation being the preferred solution, NGOs would like to stress the need for affected populations to be engaged alongside States in identifying and addressing underlying concerns in order to create the conditions that foster the voluntary, safe and dignified return of refugees. Again, NGOs are willing partners in this so long as the process is rights-based, informed by communities, adequately resourced and timeframes are carefully considered.

Third, while supporting the call for expanded and strategic use of resettlement as an important instrument of protection, NGOs call on States involved in resettlement to more actively engage in dialogue with UNHCR and host states about how resettlement programs can complement and expand protection space for refugees in host countries, in particular through concrete actions relating to the legal right to remain, to work, to move freely without the risk of detention, and to have access to education, health and other services.

Fourth, noting the call for expansion by States of complementary pathways, including humanitarian admission, labour mobility, scholarship, education and family reunification schemes, NGOs wish to note that complementary pathways should expand solutions for displaced persons in addition to existing durable solutions and not replace existing provisions. Further,
complementary pathways should be consistent with refugee law in upholding the principle of non-refoulement.

Regarding the Conclusion on Youth

Finally, civil society welcomes the recent focus on youth as a significant population with particular needs and capacities, and supports the call for UNHCR, States and other stakeholders to build on the outcomes of the Global Refugee Youth Consultations held in 2015 and 2016.

Civil society groups welcome in the Conclusion the affirmation of the importance of mainstreaming age in AGD-sensitive approaches, the acknowledgement of the value of youth participatory approaches in humanitarian programming, the call to facilitate the contribution and participation of young women and girls, and the need for disaggregated data on age and gender to be systematically collected.

On this, NGOs note that the Conclusion on Youth was drafted prior to the Global Refugee Youth Consultations and that this process does not reflect the call by young people to be meaningfully engaged in all aspects of decisions that affect them. Civil society calls on States and UNHCR to make tangible commitments to support the actions identified by young people through the Global Refugee Youth Consultations process. We would like to hear how the Conclusion will lead to concrete, practical change.

This statement will be made available on ICVA’s website at icvanetwork.org

Thank you Mr. Chair.