Standing Committee of the
High Commissioner’s Programme
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NGO Youth Statement
Agenda Item 3b

Mr. Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This statement is delivered on behalf of a wide range of non-governmental organisations. It has been drafted in consultation with, and aims to reflect the diversity of views of, the NGO community.

NGOs thank the UNHCR for the youth statement and would like to draw the Standing Committee’s attention to the following.

NGOs actively worked alongside young refugees and UNHCR through the Global Refugee Youth Consultations process, which provided an important opportunity to hear from young refugees from different countries and protection contexts.

Consultations were held in several countries, such as Pakistan, Turkey, Jordan, Malta, Ecuador, Chad, Uganda, Kenya, Zambia, Morocco, Thailand, Australia, Germany, France, USA, and New Zealand, with over 1000 young people involved. 25 refugee youth representatives participated in a 3-day global consultation prior to the 2016 UNHCR-NGO Consultations, where global challenges were highlighted, solutions identified and core actions drafted.
Despite the diversity of contexts, these global consultations highlighted commonalities in the experiences of young people seeking protection. They highlighted the lack of meaningful engagement of young people in decision-making processes, of the particular vulnerabilities of unaccompanied minors seeking asylum and stateless youth, and of the impact of the lack of durable solutions on youth. These consultations also shed light on the considerable strengths, motivations and successes of young people in creating platforms for change in their own communities. The Global Refugee Youth Consultations provided a call to action for stakeholders at all levels and including States. Young people called for a greater investment in youth-led initiatives and a recognition of youth as key agents of change, the strengthening of legal protection of separated and unaccompanied minor children, as well as an increase investment in, and access to, health care, education and livelihoods among others.

At last week’s NGO Consultations, more than 550 NGO representatives from 87 countries had the opportunity to discuss these themes further with refugee young people and to consider how youth perspectives could better inform their planning, programming and advocacy.

Civil society calls on Member States and the UNHCR to build on the momentum of the Global Refugee Youth Consultations and make tangible commitments to support the actions identified by refugee youth through these consultation processes.

We welcome the statement in yesterday’s Standing Committee discussions from UNHCR’s Director of International Protection, Carol Batchelor, about empowering young people through education at all stages – from primary to tertiary and skills-based training – setting the foundations for young people to be agents of change whatever solution lies in their future. We are heartened by the Director’s commitment that UNHCR will build on the outcomes of the Global Refugee Youth
Consultations by ‘establishing an action plan for implementing the core actions for refugee youth’ as well as expanding the agency’s AGD response initiatives – especially with regard to education, healthcare, SGBV prevention, livelihoods, sports and recreation. We commend UNHCR for considering how disaggregated data on age and sex can be used to better inform and support protection initiatives.

Finally, we warmly welcome the Director’s comment that UNHCR will be working with refugee and stateless youth as “genuine partners”, expanding and developing youth leadership programs and “getting on board” with the initiatives that young people have started already.

Civil society, including youth-led organizations, are looking forward to working with UNHCR and Members States to deliver on these commitments.

The statement will be made available at icvanetwork.org

Thank you Mr. Chair.