NGO intervention on Programme of action: Areas in need of support - solutions (Part IV)
Agenda item 5

Dear Chairperson,

This intervention reflects a diversity of views among NGOs.

Overall, NGOs acknowledge that the Solutions section now better integrates gender concerns although AGD considerations could also be strengthened. Attempts to link this section to responsibility-sharing mechanisms are positive. We particularly welcome proposals on pledges towards resettlement and pathways and calls to support local integration.

More specifically, we are encouraged to see non-refoulement added in relation to voluntary repatriation. We also appreciate the new language underscoring that voluntary repatriation is the preferred solution in the ‘majority of refugee situations’, not primarily of all refugees. However, we remain concerned by the assertion that “voluntary repatriation is not necessarily conditioned on the accomplishment of political solutions in the country of origin”. Incentives and penalties are sometimes used to coerce refugees’ consent to return, often leading to added instability in countries of origin and further displacement. Voluntary repatriation is also predicated on child-friendly, gender- and disability-responsive information-sharing on protection risks, helping informed decision-making. Finally, we suggest adding details on tripartite agreements to ensure this tool is updated to bring additionalities.

In situations where refugees freely chose to return, support for countries of origin is vital. We welcome invitation for peacebuilding, development and humanitarian support. We underline, however, that in countries of origin, humanitarian actors often face tremendous access constraints. As such, there is an urgent need to ensure unfettered access for humanitarian actors; increase unearmarked and multiyear humanitarian funding; and to underline the ‘do no harm’ principle. When providing support to countries of origin, it is vital to respect and increase local capacities. The role of faith-based organisations in reconciliation and of Diaspora in reconstruction efforts should be noted.

We welcome consideration of internal displacement in repatriation processes. As we mark the Guiding Principles 20th anniversary, we welcome the call to incorporate these in into national laws and policies of countries of origin.

We note positive additions in support of returnees, such as cash assistance and risk analysis systems. While gender-responsive programming and promoting economic opportunities are a welcome developments, we believe such opportunities should be age- and gender-responsive and provide opportunities to young people upon return. Post-return monitoring should include human rights organisations and consider legal and economic conditions of returnees in addition to safety.

Resettlement is an integral part of responsibility-sharing and its strategic use can bring value-added. We welcome the three-year strategy to reach out to non-traditional resettlement countries as it could
bring concrete additionality, especially as it now includes other pathways for admission. However, in a context of shrinking resettlement options, this should not result in a zero-sum game. To broaden the support base, all countries will need to increase resettlement quotas. We also encourage that the strategy should not wait to be finalised. Rather, the 2021 Refugee Forum should be an occasion to evaluate the strategy’s achievements against concrete global targets. We also welcome the inclusion of sponsorship programmes and emphasise that these must be in addition to – not at the expense of – state contributions. To scale up such programmes, the compact must invite States to adapt their legislations and encourage a tolerant environment for incoming refugees. Resettlement must fully respect family unity in all socio-cultural dimensions. Enhancing international mobility of refugees would also allow them to seek employment opportunities, study and family unification.

Where refugees develop close ties with host communities, and prefer staying, local integration is the durable solution. When given the opportunity, refugees can enrich the prosperity of their hosts. Regardless of any ultimate durable solution, host states should create avenues for refugees to rebuild their lives and achieve self-reliance through national policy frameworks. However, host countries have their own developmental challenges and require significant support to integrate refugees in their development plans. Support for local solutions should go hand-in-hand with efforts to increase tolerance towards refugees. The media can play a vital role in this perspective.

A detailed version of this intervention is available on icvanetwork.org

Thank you.