Thank you, Chair.

Civil society welcomes that after a hiatus of several years the UNHCR Executive Committee adopted not just one but two Conclusions on Protection in 2016.

Whilst the Conclusion on International Cooperation does not go as far as we would have liked, we see opportunities to build on this in the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework, especially with regard to responsibility sharing. These opportunities must not be missed.

The first ever ExCom Conclusion on Youth provides welcome attention to an important issue and we were pleased to see the process draw on the large scale consultation that civil society and UNHCR carried out with refugee youth.

We continue to see a value in the Conclusions process where it can address protection concerns and advance guidance and we are pleased to see the continuing momentum in this process.

We acknowledge the decision to postpone the conclusion on resilience and self-reliance in light of the potential overlap with the content of the Global Compact on Refugees. However, this is of high importance to NGOs, refugees and host communities. There must therefore be a clear process to ensure that this is indeed a ‘postponement’ not a sidestepping of the issue. As a consequence, the NGO community would like to see this theme covered by future ExCom work.

The time between now and the adoption of the Global Compact on Refugees can actually be put to constructive use: we call for a process to take advantage of those months to feed into the process through research, tapping into NGOs’ expertise and identify good practices. If, as we recommend, a considered and coordinated approach is taken, the lessons from the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework can be analysed and used to inform a Conclusion that, in due course, adds to and advances the anticipated coverage of self-reliance in the Compact. Preparation for this is an area where NGOs can make a significant contribution, drawing on specific technical expertise, thinking and practice. We stand ready to work with all of you on this in the coming months.
The UNHCR conference room paper on ‘Resilience and self-reliance from a protection and solutions perspective’ is also welcome, particularly its emphasis on the logic behind linking self-reliance and resilience.

With regard to the proposed conclusion on Machine Readable Travel Documents:

Since the time of the ‘Nansen Passport’, travel documents have been fundamental to ensure refugees and stateless persons can access their rights, including freedom of movement, the rights to education, to work and to maintain family relations as well as access to durable solutions.

The adoption of modern international standards for travel documents now make it imperative to ensure refugees and stateless persons benefit from – more secure – Machine-Readable Convention Travel Documents. Obviously, the sensitive nature of the personal data of refugees and stateless persons, their specific situation and their protection concerns should be taken into account. But provided proper data protection measures are in place, issuance of such travel documents can improve access to rights, durable solutions and complementary pathways. As such, the ExCom members and UNHCR have the opportunity to work on and adopt a Conclusion that can make a real, concrete, difference in the daily life of refugees and stateless persons.

NGOs continue to be ready for constructive engagement with ExCom members and UNHCR to develop such a meaningful Conclusion that addresses protection gaps and needs.

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

Thank you, Chair.