Global Compact on Refugees (GCR): ICVA update
April 2017

In April, ICVA continued its activities to support NGOs' understanding of and engagement with the follow-up to the New York Declaration, particularly the implementation of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) and the process leading to the adoption of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) in late 2018.

On 4 April, ICVA organized a first meeting involving its members as well as other interested NGOs to exchange information, ideas and strategize around the CRRF and GCR processes. Over 20 NGOs analyzed the first draft of the UNHCR non-paper ‘Towards a Global Compact on Refugees: a Proposed Roadmap’. The objective was to better identify how NGOs can engage in the process, with UNHCR and other actors. The discussion also addressed possible NGO initiatives on drafting position papers. Following-up on this meeting, ICVA is in the process of working with a number of NGOs to develop such a propositional document, which will put forward perspectives on what the GCR may entail. Notes from this meeting are available to ICVA members on ICVA website.

This discussion among NGOs also served to prepare for a meeting held at ICVA on 5 April with UNHCR. Ellen Hansen (Office of the Assistant High Commissioner for Protection), Johan Cells (Head of the Governance and Partnership Service) as well as members of the UNHCR CRRF Task Team and Partnership Section joined about 25 NGOs for this occasion. UNHCR presented an updated version of the UNHCR Roadmap and discussed its content with the meeting participants. The new version of the roadmap takes into account inputs from states and other stakeholders. It aims at ensuring sufficient consultations to discuss relevant substance on CRRF’s themes and country application so as to develop a consensus document to be presented to the General Assembly in mid-2018. UNHCR repeated that entry points for NGOs would include the 2017 UNHCR-NGO Annual Consultations, the Standing Committees, the Executive Committee, the series of thematic discussions to be held in Geneva in 2017, the High Commissioner’s Dialogue on Protection Challenges, the formal consultations to be held in Geneva in 2018, as well as a number of other meetings, notably at regional level. NGOs welcomed the opportunities for engagement the roadmap affords and pressed UNHCR to provide further details such as the dates and participation modalities for each thematic discussion and formal consultation. Such details would allow NGOs to organize themselves, prepare, and therefore provide meaningful contributions to the debates. Notes from this meeting are available to ICVA members on ICVA website.

On 6 April, Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, Volker Türk also presented the new version of the roadmap at the United Nations in New York at an event entitled ‘Follow-up to the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants: UNHCR’s Proposed Roadmap for the Global Compact on Refugees’.

To help in the mapping of important events on the road to the GCR, ICVA has developed a draft ‘Timeline of Main Opportunities for NGO Engagement Towards the Refugee Compact’, which will be updated as needed. In a similar effort, ICVA also sketched its ‘Support for NGOs to Engage with the Refugee Compact’.
On 10 April, the first meeting of the NGO-IFRC-UNHCR Reference Group on the CRRF took place at UNHCR headquarters and with NGO networks calling in according to its Terms of Reference. The meeting provided an additional space to exchange information on the practical application of CRRF in specific countries and on the GCR roadmap. Moreover, NGOs particularly sought clarifications on the status of CRRF Secretariats in the roll-out countries and the role civil society may be expected to have in this context. The Secretariats are being established in Uganda and Tanzania and NGOs are meant to be involved in the process. The meeting also initiated a common reflection on the appropriate methods to gather best practices and lessons learned from roll-out countries and beyond those contexts. This discussion included an initial look at goals, targets and indicators, which may – in due course – contribute to an evaluation process. The group further reflected on approaches to improve advocacy and information dissemination around the CRRF application and the GCR process.

The second meeting of the Reference Group is scheduled to take place in late May.

Notes from this meeting are available to ICVA members on ICVA website.

On 21 April, UNHCR held its third briefing of the year on the Global Compact on Refugees at the Palais des Nations, Geneva. On this occasion, Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, Volker Türk and Daniel Endres, Director of Comprehensive Responses, provided details and answered questions related to the process outlined in the roadmap, the implementation of the CRRF in specific countries, and relevant partnership issues. The event was well attended, particularly by NGOs which intervened with questions and suggestions relating to e.g., how responsibility sharing may be reflected in the Programme of Action; how the GCR could more clearly reflect a human-rights based approach; as well as how women empowerment could be linked to the implementation of the CRRF in the pilot countries. Reacting to a suggestion on the necessity to improve information dissemination, UNHCR announced that a web portal is being developed to allow for a more organized and centralized information sharing process. UNHCR also launched a webpage on ‘Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework: Delivering more comprehensive and predictable responses for refugees’, with a video message from High Commissioner Grandi on the CRRF. NGOs also highlighted that, given limited resources and capacities, it would be important to ensure coherence between the calendar for the development of the GCR and the Global Compact for Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration, thus avoiding scheduling conflicts and allowing for constructive synergies. Notes from this meeting are available to ICVA members on ICVA website.
NGOs continued to be active with concrete projects and outputs, exchanging information and discussing approaches with ICVA, particularly as advocacy and position papers on the CRRF and GCR are being developed. For example, the International Rescue Committee issued a policy brief on 'The Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework: Moving from New York Declaration Commitments to Action'.

On 20 April, a second webinar was organized on the Initiative on Child Rights in the Global Compacts coordinated by Terre des Hommes and Save the Children. Information on how to attend the related Global Conference on Children on the Move (12-13 June 2017 in Berlin, Germany) are available on the initiative’s website.

Interesting analyses were also published in April. In particular:

- The Lowy Institute in Australia has been running a series of articles on the CRRF/GCR, with a focus on Asia. The latest article was co-written by Janet Lim, former UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner (Operations).
- Jane McAdam of the Andrew & Renata Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law has issued a 'Factsheet: The 2018 Global Compacts on Refugees and Migration'.

Information on ICVA and NGO activities, articles and statements that relate to the CRRF and Global Compact on Refugees can be found on ICVA's website and by following @ICVA_Displaced on Twitter. ICVA also welcomes any information that may be shared in order to foster a more collective approach to the CRRF and Global Compact on Refugees. To request and provide information, please contact Jerome.Elie@icvanetwork.org