NGO statement on the Global Compact on Refugees and the preparations for the first Global Refugee Forum

Dear Chair,

This statement was drafted through wide consultations with NGOs.

The Global Refugee Forum represents the first major opportunity to turn the Global Compact on Refugees into action. As civil society representatives, we are eager to contribute to the preparation process to ensure it delivers tangible improvements in the lives of refugees and their host communities on three different levels. **First, States and other stakeholders should pledge concrete contributions based on actual needs.** Second, there should be a consistent way to keep track of pledged contributions over time and align them to GCR objectives. Third, refugees and host communities must be engaged before, during and after the Forum in ways that support meaningful participation.

I. States and other stakeholders should pledge concrete contributions based on collectively identified needs

We welcome the Forum as a major high-level gathering focusing primarily on refugees and the many challenges they face. We are also acutely aware of the risk that the outcome of the Forum might replicate the dynamics we have witnessed in other previous conferences, namely that pledges will be either too vague or left unchecked to make a difference. To signal the step change refugees and their hosts so desperately require, it will be essential to encourage concrete, specific and time-bound pledges.

To do so, we strongly recommend anchoring individual pledges in the four GCR objectives, as well as its ultimate goal of making responsibility-sharing more predictable and equitable. Pledges should also meet needs identified at the local, national and regional levels through multi-stakeholder consultations. **NGOs stand ready to support national governments in assessing needs and urge UNHCR and international actors to sustain these preparatory efforts.** However, GRF preparations at country level have yet to start and regional consultations either will only briefly touch on the GRF or are scheduled later in the year. The GRF preparatory process seems therefore limited to global discussions in Geneva with no information on what actually needs to happen on the ground. We still have time to reverse this trend but we must act quickly. NGOs are reaching out to UNHCR Country Offices to inquire about GRF consultations and look forward to sharing preliminary thinking at the UNHCR-NGO Consultations in July.

Regarding co-sponsoring arrangements, we recommend UNHCR set up a transparent system to share information on potential and confirmed co-sponsors by GRF theme online as quickly as possible. We also ask that UNHCR disclose whether future financial pledges are new or renew past commitments.

II. We need to a consistent way to keep track of contributions and align them to GCR objectives

NGOs appreciate the challenges in mobilising adequate support for the Forum, particularly at a time when public narrative on refugees is far from positive. Pledging contributions, however, should not disregard the
work that has been done to build a credible system to monitor GCR implementation, including commitments that will be made at the GRF. NGOs have made steady and constructive contributions to the design of GCR indicators; we remain eager to support their development in the lead up to the GRF. In this regard, we note that the GRF pledging format does not include any mention of GCR indicators, nor of any follow-up and review mechanisms mentioned in para. 103 of the Compact – particularly the mechanism for tracking the implementation of pledges and contributions. We therefore request UNHCR to clarify two things: first, how the GRF pledging process is supposed to align to the GCR monitoring system so that pledges can coherently contribute to the achievement of GCR objectives and outcomes? Second, when the mechanism for tracking the implementation of pledges and contributions will be made available in the lead up to the GRF? Reporting on GRF commitments does not need to be burdensome and can contribute to a system supporting States and other stakeholders in fulfilling their commitments. However, it does need to be consistent or we will end up with a plethora of promises impossible to track. Therefore, only pledges that can be provably tracked should be regarded as official contributions to the Forum.

On the GCR indicators more specifically, we welcome some of the revisions circulated by UNHCR in early June. We hope the final version of the monitoring framework will include robust indicators that speak to refugee protection and help measure outcomes, rather than inputs or short-term outputs for refugees and their hosts. We also recommend finalizing indicators before the GRF, rather than having an iterative process, which may jeopardise the credibility of the overall GCR monitoring by continually shifting the goalposts and the baselines.

III. Refugees and host communities must be engaged in the Forum, supporting their meaningful participation.

NGOs welcome UNHCR’s plans to include refugees in the GRF preparatory process. We applaud the decision to include refugee representatives in national delegations and to take into account the outcomes of preparatory meetings organised by refugees themselves. Going forward, it will be important to adopt a variety of other innovative approaches to ensure a broad consultation with refugees. UNHCR will also need to establish a transparent and inclusive mechanism to ensure these consultations feed into the pledging process. At national level, similar mechanisms will need to be established by the country government to allow for meaningful dialogue with refugees and their host communities on possible contributions to the GRF. Having refugees and host communities co-sponsor a specific theme should also be pursued, particularly in the case of women and girls.

In conclusion, NGOs wish to reiterate their support for the first Global Refugee Forum. We believe concrete pledges, robust accountability and inclusive participation will be key ingredients of success. We are determined to do our part to support preparations and urge UNHCR, States and other stakeholders to do likewise as quickly as possible.

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

Thank you.