Mr. Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This statement has been drafted in consultation with, and is delivered on behalf of, a wide range of NGOs and aims to reflect the diversity of views within the NGO community.

NGOs thank UNHCR for its summary on durable solutions and would like to draw the Standing Committee’s attention to 3 key areas for follow-up.

First: We urge States to reverse the global trend towards reduced quality of asylum: The prospect of (re)-establishing full access to rights, including legal protection for refugees, should be the determining factor in people’s decision to pursue a particular durable solution. Too often, solutions can result in reduced quality of asylum, whether it be due to reduced funding, legal restrictions by the host state or, as is often the case, returns motivated by political interests rather than the wishes and intentions of the displaced populations and a genuine concern for the conditions in areas of return. We encourage States and UNHCR to recognise that the quality and sustainability of solutions often rests on the quality of asylum. A secure and safe space of asylum can act as a transitional environment, preparing and empowering displaced populations to develop capacities and engage, as right-holders, once solutions become possible. Displaced populations that have been enabled and commence a solution process with resources often stand a much better chance of success for sustainable solutions. We urge refugee-hosting states to uphold their responsibilities to provide protection and support for displaced people, while allowing for refugees to fully access rights, in recognition that improved self-reliance will pave the way for sustainable solutions. We call on donor states to provide the necessary financial support to this approach.

Second: Strategies for solutions should commence at the onset of displacement. While the priority in the first stage of a displacement crisis is saving lives and ensuring protection, efforts should also be invested in identifying how the immediate response impacts on future prospects for solutions, including through the early involvement of development partners. Linking humanitarian and development assistance is paramount and an opportunity for multiple sets of actors to contribute to more robust and sustainable protection, mainstreaming resilience programming to bridge the divide. In this respect we urge humanitarian and development actors to work together at the onset of displacement, and member states to ensure this approach is taken in funding mechanisms. There are opportunities for relevant stakeholders to work through
platforms that can, and are, playing an active role in this, such as the Solutions Alliance, and through civil society such as the Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat (ReDSS), whose coalition of some of the largest implementing agencies operating across East and Horn of Africa offers the experience, evidence base and flexibility to play a key role in this regard.

Third: The broad approach to unlocking protracted displacement and realising solutions must take its point of departure in international normative and legal frameworks and commitments. Most notably, this includes the Refugee Conventions, the Guiding Principles on IDPs and state ratified regional frameworks such as the Great Lakes Protocols and the Kampala Convention on IDPs. We urge States to uphold their commitments under relevant international legal frameworks, and UNHCR and States to continue to promote implementation of frameworks on ending displacement such as the UN Secretary-General’s Decision on Durable Solutions, and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee’s Framework on Durable Solutions for IDPs.

In closing, we call on UNHCR and States to maintain protection as central to solutions for displacement. The rights of displaced persons, their protection and empowerment should be at the heart of approaches to solutions, to ensure the realisation of safe and sustainable solutions.

Thank you, Mr Chair.