EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE
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NGO Statement on the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF)
Agenda Item 5 – Coordination

Thank you, Chair.

This statement was drafted in consultation with NGOs and attempts to reflect a diversity of views.

To begin with, we would like to note progress in the practical application of the CRRF, particularly in the regions. In East Africa, NGOs welcome the recent validation of the detailed IGAD Road Map and Results Framework of the Nairobi Declaration and NGO participation in the planning. In Central America as well, we welcome the details released on the process and timeline for the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (CRPSF). NGOs in the region are eager to contribute and are planning various consultations that will feed into the process.

However, we cannot help noticing the persisting regional imbalance in the design and implementation of the CRRF, which is still focused on less developed countries of first asylum. While these are important partners in refugee protection and need strong international solidarity, developed countries’ role cannot be limited to that of donors. To be truly “comprehensive”, the CRRF should more actively promote durable solutions as a central piece of global responsibility-sharing.

NGOs worldwide would welcome more regular updates on the CRRF roll-out in specific countries and suggest making more use of UNHCR’s CRRF Portal. We also note positive developments at country level such as the launch of the CRRF Secretariat in Tanzania, inclusive of national and international NGOs. We are looking forward to learn more details on the roadmap and Terms of Reference for the Secretariat and Steering Committee.

We also warmly welcome the legal reforms underway in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Tanzania, in line with commitments made at the Leaders’ Summit. The intended changes that would allow refugees greater freedom of movement and access to education, work, and services can improve the quality of asylum for hundreds of thousands of refugees. We are keen to see those changes resulting in a new reality where ‘care & maintenance’ and confinement strategies become the exception.

However, we also note that in a number of cases, the CRRF roll-out is not unfolding as fast as originally hoped. Multi-stakeholder approaches take time. NGOs can contribute to more efficient work, but to fully leverage our capacities, more effective communication at all levels will be essential.

Moreover, NGOs would like to raise the following concerns:

- Three months after the Uganda Solidarity Summit, NGOs are still concerned about the level of pledges which continues to fall short of meeting needs. NGOs also wonder whether the pledges represented new funding and stress the need for swift, coherent and transparent allocation. We also note the slow progress in establishing the CRRF Secretariat, which affect progress in programming and response. NGOs’ representation and role in the Secretariat and Steering Committee remain unclear, although an NGO-seconded representative to the Uganda Secretariat is now ready to get on board.
In Tanzania, we welcome the government’s recent announcement of plans to offer citizenship to the remaining 1972 Burundi refugees. However, we are disturbed by the tightening asylum space observed over the past months, evidenced in significant pressure for return on newly arrived refugees from Burundi. There is a pressing need for more consistent monitoring of the status of refugees who have already returned to Burundi. We also call for reverting to a more integrative approach to recent arrivals in Tanzania. NGOs hope the Tanzanian government will remain committed to the CRRF and its Leaders’ Summit pledges. To be able to do so, Tanzania will also need concrete support from the international community.

With regard to Central America, NGOs welcomed the recent Geneva briefing and would appreciate further clarity on the structures developed to apply the CRSPF. This would ensure more predictable and constructive engagement. Including El Salvador in future planning should also be considered. Its displacement crisis bears structural similarities to that of its neighbours, and could thus benefit from an integrated and well-coordinated regional response.

Despite hosting the largest volumes of refugees worldwide, Asia and the Middle East continue to be absent from the formal CRRF roll-out. Throughout the regions, resettlement remains a remote possibility for most, while local integration is likewise almost impossible. Thus, further opportunities to engage the regions on the CRRF should be explored.

We also note the persistent absence of Europe and North America from the CRRF architecture. This is particularly concerning at a time when many countries in both regions implement policies in apparent contradiction with the CRRF. These regions are also key to CRRF Pillar One (reception and admission), without which no CRRF can be "comprehensive”.

On the Global Compact process, NGOs appreciated the ideas shared at the first Thematic Discussion in July. NGOs strongly recommend, however, that responsibility-sharing be mainstreamed throughout the remaining Discussions. We call on UNHCR to formulate in the Programme of Action, and Member States to support, a vision and road map that can set a trajectory for substantive progress in this area.

We also hope there will be opportunities for NGO panelists and refugees to showcase their good practices and analyses. NGOs are preparing substantive contributions. Thus, elements from the Child Rights in the Global Compacts Recommendations should be highlighted, particularly alternatives to detention and a comprehensive approach to protecting the rights of displaced young people.

The issue of statelessness should also be included in the coming deliberations, recalling that the New York Declaration recognizes that statelessness can be a root cause of forced displacement, and that forced displacement, in turn, can lead to statelessness.

NGOs also commend UNHCR for the efforts developed since the June UNHCR-NGO Annual Consultations to increase refugees’ inclusion in the process. There is scope for collaboration in this perspective as NGOs have initiated similar efforts, including in East Africa.

In a number of countries, including Australia, Canada, Honduras, and Guatemala, NGOs have been involved in discussions with governments and have in some cases developed joint NGO positions to inform the governments’ inputs into the CRRF and GCR process.

In conclusion, Mr. Chair, let’s remember that exactly a year ago, on 19 and 20 September, Member States reaffirmed the importance of the international refugee regime and adopted commitments to strengthen our collective capacity to address mass displacement. We need to ensure the momentum is
maintained to actually deliver on those commitments. The geopolitical situation is unfortunately a constant reminder that more needs to be done in this perspective.

A more detailed version of this statement is available online at icvanetwork.org

Thank you.