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NGO Statement on the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF)
Agenda Item 5(b)

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

First, we wish to take stock of the implementation of the CRRF at regional level. In Africa, we welcome IGAD and Member States’ commitment to the Nairobi Declaration; the Plan of Action and Results Framework for Durable Solutions for the Somali situation; the Uganda Solidarity Summit; the nine pledges made by the Ethiopian government; and the new Djibouti refugee law. In addition, we welcome the outcome of the first Regional Conference on Refugee Education, which took place under the auspices of IGAD on 12-14 December 2017. In this regard, we will proactively monitor progress against the commitments made in the Djibouti Declaration on Regional Refugee Education and its Plan of Action.

With regard to the CRRF roll-out process, we note that CRRF structures have been created at national level in Ethiopia, Uganda and Tanzania. Nevertheless, we also note with concern that the government of Tanzania has recently withdrawn from the CRRF roll-out process. As NGO community, we would like to know more about the reasons behind this decision and lessons learnt to ensure it remains an isolated case.

In Central America, we welcome the agreement on the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework, MIRPS, reached at the San Pedro Sula Conference last October. We stand ready to engage with UNHCR, country governments and the Organization of American States to ensure a sustainable follow-up at regional level. Despite these promising steps, we note serious gaps in state responses to displacement, which to a certain extent are currently being filled by CSOs. We urge States to identify key priorities to tackle first, and start addressing them immediately. Globally, we also note that in a number of cases, the CRRF roll-out is not unfolding as fast as originally hoped, ultimately leaving vulnerable populations without the services and support they need to survive and thrive.

Lack of clearly defined CRRF objectives and governance at country level is a challenge, especially in engaging with displacement-affected communities and sub-national actors. As the CRRF moves from pilot to regular order, there is a need for more systematic inclusion of refugees, IDPs, returnees and host communities in all aspects of the CRRF, including in the design and implementation of solutions programmes in pilot countries. Clearly defined multi-stakeholder governance structures are key to ensure truly multi-stakeholder approaches to CRRF.
implementation. Similarly, the inclusion of the displaced in national development plans is essential: refugees, IDPs and returnees should be included in key sectors such as health, education, and good governance. Furthermore, an accountability framework that identifies a set of collective outcomes, targets, and measures should be a key feature of the Global Compact and must be a core focus for UNHCR and partners in 2018; without such a framework, how will we know if the CRRF is having an impact on the lives and livelihoods of refugees in five years time?

While welcoming progress in the CRRF implementation in pilot countries, we cannot help noticing that the framework remains a prerogative of less developed countries, as if it did not concern the massive displacement taking place in the Mediterranean or the North of Central America. NGOs call for a comprehensive approach to protracted displacement by encouraging all concerned Member States to roll out the CRRF as soon as possible.

In particular, NGOs would like to raise the following issues:

- **In Uganda**, we welcome the decision to establish the National Refugee Welfare Advisory Group, currently under development. This is fully in line with the principle of refugee inclusion and representation. We are also pleased to note that the NGO community has collectively funded an NGO secondee to the CRRF secretariat. We also welcome the recent endorsement of the CRRF Road Map, which was developed in consultation with all stakeholders. As we are learning with concern about recent allegations of fraud and corruption in refugee response, we underline the importance to focus on the implementation of a truly comprehensive refugee response. Strengthening transparency and accountability of actors involved in the refugee response is one of the essential principles of the CRRF Road Map. We also appreciate the World Bank’s decision to scale up its support to improve refugees’ access to social services and economic opportunities. However, a lackluster Solidarity Summit, where only one-quarter of the $2 billion required to meet needs in Uganda was raised, indicates that the international community is still far from equitably sharing the responsibility of supporting refugees and host communities.

- **In Ethiopia**, we welcome the first meeting of the CRRF Steering Committee last December, and in particular the inclusion of international and local NGOs in its governance structure. We hope to see higher engagement from government partners also. The government of Ethiopia has taken important steps in laying out a roadmap to implementing its nine pledges, aligned with the government’s Growth and Transformation Plan II. We look forward to the actualisation of the planned ARRA-led trainings for district government staff on the changes in refugee-hosting policy and practice. We also look forward to seeing the new Refugee Regulation, currently under development.

- **With regard to Djibouti**, we are pleased to note that its new refugee law has come into force with the signature of two presidential decrees in December.

- **Tanzania’s** withdrawal from the CRRF process is alarming. We call on all stakeholders to seek to identify the reasons for the change of course and discuss the way forward,
particularly for the large number of refugees hosted in Tanzania. It remains important to maintain collaborative approaches and to better understand the support needed to ensure protection, assistance and responsibility-sharing at all levels.

- With regard to **Central America**, the MIRPS is presented as a regional application of the CRRF and a collective action plan to strengthen protection and promote durable solutions\(^1\). Costa Rica’s Plan of Action that resulted from the MIRPS is already under implementation. However, we note that there is still no adoption of a special migration status on humanitarian grounds as a complementary form of international protection. This is despite the fact that one of the resolutions recognizes that there are people who cannot be returned to their countries of origin even if they do not meet the 1951 Convention refugee criteria, because doing so would entail a reasonable risk of suffering irreparable harm, like people from Venezuela.

- **Asia** and the **Middle East** continue to be absent from the formal CRRF roll-out. Jordan and Lebanon are implementing country-specific compacts agreed to at the Responding to Syria and the Region Conference in London in May 2016. Although these compacts are bridging the humanitarian-development divide, lessons from these contexts are not being fully brought to bear in global conversations. The international community response to the most recent influx of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh also does not reflect the principles laid out in the CRRF, creating an open question of where and when the CRRF applies.

- We note the investment from **European** donors in durable solutions in the CRRF pilot countries, including multiyear funding from the European Union, Danida, Sida and DfID, and recognise the increased investments in longer-term solutions forthcoming from the World Bank. However, this type of financing remains the exception, not the norm. Multiyear financing enables governments and humanitarian and development actors to plan over the arc of displacement crises, and recognizes that today’s refugees are displaced for ten years on average. We call on donor nations, including the European Union, United States, Canada, Germany and others, to provide more multiyear financing to support lower income host nations. We also remind that those countries also have an important role to place as host and resettlement countries.

We hope there will be more opportunities for NGO representatives and refugees to discuss CRRF progress within the Compact process. In particular, refugees by nature of their status are left out of the traditional state-citizen relationship and therefore must have a chance to represent themselves in dialogues about policies and practices that will affect them. To be successful, the CRRF roll-out (and ultimately the Global Compact on Refugees) must reflect the unique needs, constraints and opportunities of refugee populations.

Thank you, Chair.