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.

First, we wish to take stock of the CRRF implementation 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. We also welcome the outcome of the December 2017 Regional Conference on Refugee Education and will proactively monitor progress against the commitments made.

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 Nevertheless, we also note with concern that the government of Tanzania has recently withdrawn from the process.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 reached in San Pedro Sula last October. We stand ready to engage with all stakeholders to ensure a sustainable follow-up. Despite promising steps, we note serious gaps in state responses to displacement, often filled by CSOs. We urge States to identify key priorities to tackle 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.

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 CRRF aspects, including in the design and implementation of solutions programmes and national development plans. Furthermore, an accountability framework that identifies a set of collective outcomes, targets, and measures should be a key feature of the CRRF and must be a priority in 2018; without such a framework, how will we know if the CRRF is having an impact on the lives and livelihoods of refugees?

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

More precisely, NGOs would like to raise the following issues:

- **In Uganda**, we welcome the decision to establish the National Refugee Welfare Advisory Group. This is fully in line with the principle of refugee inclusion and representation. We also remind that the NGO community has collectively funded an NGO secondee to the CRRF secretariat. Furthermore, we welcome the recent endorsement of the CRRF Road Map 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 of strengthening transparency and accountability mechanisms. We also appreciate the World Bank’s decision to scale up its support to improve refugees’ access to social services and economic opportunities. We also note that the disappointing result of the Solidarity Summit 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 the inclusion of NGOs in its governance structure. The government of Ethiopia has taken important steps in laying out a roadmap to implement its nine pledges. 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.

- **In Central America**, the MIRPS is presented as a collective CRRF action plan to strengthen protection and promote durable solutions. Costa Rica’s Plan of Action is already being implemented. However, we note the persisting absence of a special migration status on humanitarian grounds as a complementary form of international protection. This status would protect those who cannot be returned to their countries of origin even if they do not meet the 1951 Convention criteria.

- **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 London Conference 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 for durable solutions in CRRF pilot countries, including multiyear funding. 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 to provide more multiyear financing to support lower income host nations. We also remind that those countries also have an important role to play as host and resettlement countries.

We hope there will be more opportunities to discuss CRRF progress. To be successful, the roll-out (and ultimately the GCR) must reflect the unique needs, constraints and opportunities of refugee populations.

A longer version of the statement is available on icvanetwork.org.

Thank you, Chair.