Thank you, Chair.

This statement has been drafted through a wide consultation with NGOs and attempts to reflect the diversity of views within the NGO community.

Last December, the High Commissioner’s Dialogue on Protection Challenges was a milestone in the process to develop a Global Compact on Refugees. It aimed at taking stock of the five multi-stakeholder thematic discussions organized in Geneva from July to November 2017 and we appreciate that it also brought new elements into the discussion.

NGOs appreciated the space provided through panel participation, side events and interventions from the floor to voice their final recommendations for the zero draft of the Programme of Action. We encourage UNHCR and Member States to consult the written contributions and key messages developed by NGOs on the occasion of the High Commissioner’s Dialogue. It was also critical to benefit from direct inputs from refugees at the Dialogue, as well as during the 5 thematic discussions. We now hope this will pave the way for more systematic space provided to refugees in policy debates that affect them.

The Dialogue was particularly meaningful in its call for increased responsibility-sharing. NGOs support the establishment, through the Global Compact on Refugees, of a clear multi-stakeholder mechanism to provide equitable and predictable support to host countries. Responsibility-sharing should not be expressed solely in financial terms but also include political, material and technical support. Moreover, the Dialogue particularly highlighted three themes relevant to responsibility-sharing that may have a real impact on how we respond to refugee crises:

- **The establishment of a Global Refugee Response Group or Platform**: NGOs attended with interest a workshop held ahead of the Dialogue and welcomed further discussions at the Dialogue. Now that this concept has been taken forward into the zero draft of the Programme of Action, we remain interested in providing our thinking on how such a body could bring a real added-value. NGOs agree with the many comments made at the first Formal Consultation about the need for further clarifications on the potential role for the platform, how it would be constituted and work. Those details are needed to make sure the platform can muster the authority and efficiency to take decisive collective actions. Similarly, we believe that the Dialogue highlighted useful elements linked to the concept of solidarity conferences that did not find their way into the zero draft. We hope UNHCR and Member States will continue engaging with us on those topics.
- **Policies and practices to promote freedom of movement and access to livelihood opportunities for refugees were central to many discussions**: NGOs support efforts to go beyond ‘care and maintenance’ approaches, provided proper safeguards are in place and the human rights of refugees are reinforced in the process. The Dialogue allowed for strong contributions on how to promote refugee inclusion in national systems and services and how this can promote refugees’ well-being, enhance responsibility-sharing, and support work on all durable solutions and other pathways. We note that despite the emphasis on self-reliance in the zero draft, it contains little about freedom of movement and protection implications. We ask that those gaps be addressed in future iterations of the Programme of Action.

- There was also a rich discussion on the best way **complementarity, consistency and coherence between the two compacts** can be achieved. While recognizing that the development of the two compacts follow distinct and separate processes, NGOs continue to consider that cross-cutting issues should be addressed to ensure constructive relationship between the two texts. As mentioned in the session’s summary note, the Dialogue indicated wide multi-stakeholder agreement on the need to identify and address elements and challenges common to both compacts, ensuring that no issue “falls through the cracks”. Noting that this subject is absent from the zero draft, and now that both zero drafts have been issued, we call on Member States, UNHCR and other UN agencies to design a process (even if informal) to work on complementarity, consistency and coherence. The NGO community is developing its own inputs to help in this reflection.

Moreover, while discussions at the High Commissioner’s Dialogue on Protection Challenges recognized that children constitute one of several vulnerable refugee groups, a particular focus on children was missing from the thematic sessions. It cannot be taken for granted that children will be adequately protected unless we look at all protection challenges and possible responses through the lens of children’s specific needs and vulnerabilities. Systems, services, policies, planning and all available mechanisms -- locally, nationally and transnationally – must be child-sensitive and founded upon the principles of best interests of the child and their protection. A number of key recommendations were made at the 2017 High Commissioner’s Dialogue as a stocktaking moment for the Global Compact on Refugees, as well as at the 2016 High Commissioner’s Dialogue, which focused on children on the move. These concrete recommendations must be taken into account during the formal consultations on the Global Compact on Refugees. Concretely, States and other stakeholders should collectively commit to and implement an array of measures, among them:

- Working towards ending the immigration detention of children and applying alternatives to detention
- Facilitating family unity and expanding access to family reunification
- Putting in place best interests assessments and determination procedures for children
- Establishing a continuum of care for children through relevant services and mechanisms
- Ensuring that professionals working with children are adequately trained in child rights
- Encouraging and engaging in cross-border cooperation that is based on a child protection agenda
• Setting up procedures to respond to the urgent and emergency protection needs of children, including systematically providing child-friendly information and language support to enable them to communicate those needs
• Guaranteeing refugee and stateless children's full access to services, including shelter/accommodation, education, health care, the right to a nationality and birth registration

In particular, education is one of the key sectors of interventions that should be prioritized at the onset of any refugee movement. Refugee and stateless children and their parents consistently identify education as a priority. All possible measures should be taken to ensure that these children have access to quality learning opportunities within 30 days of their arrival. This means that the Programme of Action should include the following measures:

- **Increase access**: States should develop plans and enact policies to ensure that all refugee children are able to access relevant, quality learning opportunities that are part of and recognized by the national system of their host country. Host countries must be supported to remove policy, administrative and practical barriers that prevent refugee children from attending the formal school system.

- **Invest**: Additional resources must be directed at improved planning and preparedness so that communities that receive refugees have in place what they need to provide additional services when refugees arrive. Host country governments should be incentivized to include refugee education in national education sector plans, including through dedicated funding for refugee populations and local communities from e.g. the Global Partnership for Education and other donors. Humanitarian and development financing should invest in early development, primary, secondary and tertiary education and in vocational training for refugee children and youth.

- **Improve quality**: The quality and relevance of learning should be improved to ensure refugee student learning and well-being. This includes scaling up of the provision of pre-primary learning opportunities for refugee and host communities, capacity building and language support for teachers and increasing certification pathways.

Also essential is the explicit inclusion of internally displaced persons (IDPs) into the Global Compact on Refugees, as highlighted by IDMC during the last thematic consultations. Indeed, refugee crises are, in large part, a symptom of the failure to protect and assist people displaced within their own country. While the majority of IDPs don’t end up crossing international borders, many will nevertheless become tomorrow’s refugees and vulnerable migrants. Moreover, while more than 550,000 refugees returned to their countries of origin in 2016, many face the risk of de facto internal displacement if they are unable to go back to their place of origin or sustainably integrate elsewhere. As such, addressing and reducing internal displacement should be a bedrock of the compact. We therefore recommend:

- Strengthening the recommendation for countries of origin to incorporate the Guiding Principles into their national policies, to be included into the main body of text of the Programme of Action.
- Noting that efforts to address and mitigate internal displacement will have an impact on refugee flows in the region.

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1 For more details on the measures, see Save the Children’s reports “Restoring hope, rebuilding futures”, “Losing out on learning” and Save the Children/Pearson/UNHCR’s Promising Practices on Refugee Education synthesis report and case studies.
• Emphasising the importance of voluntariness and respect for the core principle of non-refoulement, given the likelihood of further displacement in the case of premature, involuntary or coerced returns
• Calling for the collection of interoperable statistics covering the entire displacement continuum, including internal displacement and return, and gathering data on returnees’ progress toward re-establishing their lives against the benchmarks set out in commonly agreed standards such as the IASC framework on durable solutions.

The Global Compact on Refugees should be a potential game changer for refugees and other displaced populations, and it can be if we adequately and efficiently address the lack of international solidarity and the protection gaps seen across the world today.

Thank you, Chair.