NGO Statement on the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF)

Agenda item 5

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.

We would like to begin by recognizing progress achieved in following up on the Summits of 19-20 September 2016. CRRF Secretariats have now been launched in Uganda and Tanzania; the IGAD-led regional approach is being outlined and new countries are involved in Central America. Those are concrete steps in fulfilling important commitments to refugees. However, modalities for NGO engagement and participation need further clarification. We ask respective States and UNHCR to ensure the CRRF Secretariats and other relevant structures include NGOs and bring clarity on their role. Structures should also be set-up, inclusive of NGOs, at the regional level in Central America and the East and Horn of Africa.

NGOs stand ready to support the development of a transparent global responsibility-sharing paradigm, and move forward on implementing new ways of working. States, UNHCR and NGOs should work together to proactively ensure that host communities are adequately supported, self-reliance of refugees is prioritized and enshrined in law, third country solutions are made available in an effective and predictable manner, and that informed, safe and voluntary return to countries of origin is possible.

All those themes were discussed at the UNHCR-NGO Annual Consultations two weeks ago, which also highlighted four important priorities for the CRRF and Global Compact to succeed:

1. The discussion on the CRRF and Global Compact should be brought to all regions – even if the CRRF is not being applied there – thus ensuring it translates into a truly global process.
2. The discussion on the CRRF and Global Compact should be localized. We need to ensure meaningful engagement from all key constituents of the “whole-of-society” approach. A first step in this direction resides in improving information dissemination about the CRRF and the Global Compact at ‘field level’. Consulting and engaging with refugees and host communities was a major take-away from the Annual Consultations.
3. A particular focus should be placed on ensuring that the views of women and girls – the majority of refugees – are taken into consideration. Last week we heard NGOs also raise concerns about youth, IDPs, persons with disabilities, and others.
4. The CRRF and the Global Compact should be as much about finding new ways of working as to bring back the refugee system to its core: providing protection and solutions for refugees. It should strengthen refugee law, in particular the non-refoulement principle.
NGOs welcome UNHCR’s Roadmap on the Global Compact on Refugees: this brought much needed and useful clarifications. However, further explanation and joint reflection are needed to articulate clear methodologies to ensure lessons learned feed into the development of the Programme of Action. NGOs are ready to work with UNHCR and States to ensure rigorous and consistent methodology is applied to assess the CRRF application, derive lessons, collate good practices and analyse gaps and challenges.

For this to happen, NGOs also call for a more inclusive process allowing for meaningful civil society inputs into the full process. Although mindful of the inherent challenges and time pressure related to organizing the first thematic discussion of 10 July, at a minimum NGOs would hope that in the future NGOs will be provided with:

- Early information with regard to modalities for participation to allow for more meaningful preparation and participation;
- Opportunities to input in the format and agenda of the thematic discussions, allowing for NGO panelists to showcase their good practices and provide ideas and analyses;
- Improved opportunities to submit good practice examples and lessons learned via the UNHCR-NGO-IFRC Reference Group on the CRRF, UNHCR’s new online portal and other avenues;
- Direct involvement in defining the criteria to select and analyse good practices and lessons learned, through geographically diverse civil society participation;
- Direct engagement alongside States, UNHCR, and other key stakeholders in providing inputs for the Zero Draft Programme of Action;
- Beyond late 2017, a process for continuous learning on the Global Compact on Refugees will need to be instituted.

NGOs have much to offer in terms of expertise, experience and ideas. We would like to refer UNHCR and Member States to a number of papers recently developed by NGOs and networks, putting forward principles and standards on which the Global Compact should be built, essential protection elements it should include and ideas about how to structure the Programme of Action. NGOs believe those documents can help address existing ambiguities related to the Programme of Action.

Although a priority, it is unlikely that a more robust and transparent system to track responsibility sharing commitments will be completed in time for inclusion in the Global Compact on Refugees. Thus, the Programme of Action needs to include a call for more aspirational thinking to develop a global responsibility sharing mechanism. This could include clearly defined triggers linked to the scale and trends of displacement; new and innovative funding mechanisms; and approaches to incentivize more equitable sharing of responsibility.

NGOs would also like to underscore the Initiative for Child Rights in the Global Compacts. We commend UNHCR for supporting this initiative, which seeks to ensure children’s rights are upheld and mainstreamed across both Compacts. Repeating a point made at the March Standing Committee, we believe that many of the issues faced by refugees and vulnerable migrants are similar. We therefore urge UNHCR and States to work towards coherence between the two compacts and to communicate about such efforts.

Finally, NGOs would like to reflect on the Uganda Solidarity Summit on Refugees, where about $358 million were pledged. NGOs welcome the international community’s new commitments but believe this
continues to fall short of meeting refugees’ needs. Being concerned by the gap between necessary funding to develop a proper refugee response and the pledges made on 23 June, we call for additional contributions in support of Uganda, the CRRF approach and NGOs involved. Success cannot be achieved without international support and true solidarity.

A longer version of this statement will be made available on icvanetwork.org.

Thank you.