NGO Statement on the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework

Dear Chairperson,

This statement is delivered on behalf of a wide range of NGOs.

As a start, we wish to make five overall comments:

First, as the GCR takes shape, let’s recall that the CRRF is our new reality. As such, we believe the CRRF should now be applied in all refugee operations worldwide. The process should start with a multi-stakeholder comprehensive analysis with a baseline for the four CRRF objectives and subsequently formulate participatory strategies, notably with refugees and host communities.

Second, the CRRF implementation now needs to extend to mixed movement situations. It should be systematically implemented in Libya, Niger, Sudan, Yemen, Turkey, Malaysia and Thailand where many potential refugees move within mixed flows, and need access to quality asylum procedures.

Third, effective ways of engaging a wide range of actors are still needed in CRRF roll-outs. Indeed, refugees, host communities and local actors continue to be largely excluded from designing and co-creating comprehensive responses.

Fourth, most CRRF roll-outs are not matched with adequate international support. Pledges remain unfulfilled, third country options are not expanding, and extra resources and contributions from other actors are not yet convincingly raised. This illustrates the need for new approaches and new instruments. The GCR must deliver a better balance between national efforts and international support.

Fifth, a much stronger alignment is needed between the CRRF and other relevant change processes. The CRRF should particularly serve as a basis to realize SDGs and promote New Ways of Working. Collective outcomes and joint targets for enhanced protection and solutions provide meaningful ways to engage more stakeholders.

Moving to specific situations, CRRF roll-outs illustrate the potentials of regional approaches and the role that regional organizations and NGOs can play in fostering practical comprehensive approaches.

On the Somali Situation, we welcome the renewed commitments from IGAD Member States to implement the CRRF and national action plans. IGAD continues to breed political progress on comprehensive refugee responses. We also commend the fruitful multi-stakeholder collaboration in implementing the Nairobi Declaration. Space for dialogue and learning created by IGAD allowed NGOs to support the roll-out, particularly adding to comprehensive solutions analyses in Somalia and Ethiopia.

In Somalia, the 2018-2020 National Plan of Action on Durable Solutions presents a solid basis for government leadership on CRRF implementation. We look forward to the adoption of the National Policy on Displacement and appreciate steps taken to align it with Somalia’s National Development Plan. Despite useful awareness-raising sessions organized by UNHCR, we are still concerned that the CRRF remains abstract with limited engagement from Federal and Regional authorities. The framework
should be further ‘localized’, taking into account local capacities and structures while improving coordination and synergies between ongoing processes contributing to the CRRF vision.

In Central America, we welcome the recent meeting in Panama, which analyzed the status of MIRPS national chapters. Costa Rica has taken first concrete positive steps, allowing asylum-seekers access to temporary documentation while waiting for eligibility interviews. Legal documentation for asylum-seekers is indeed key to mitigate many protection risks. Furthermore, we welcome the National Council for Refugees’ decision to provide migration status on humanitarian grounds as a complementary form of international protection. This progressive step to safeguard non-refoulement can benefit many Venezuelans.

At the country level:
In Uganda, NGOs welcome tangible progress such as the recent Education Response Plan based on an integrated service delivery planning with leadership from the Education Ministry. NGOs will continue supporting its implementation and work on similar sectoral plans on water, health, environment and livelihoods. Further, we welcome the appointment of the Ministry of Local Government as co-chair of the CRRF Steering Group. This can help overcome coordination challenges between refugee response and development planning. NGOs will continue supporting an alignment between service delivery to refugees and host populations. NGOs are also committed to support a strategic approach to localization within the CRRF process. However, we highlight that the Refugee Advisory Forum is not yet functional. It needs to be resourced to empower refugee representatives and become a truly representational body. We also encourage UNHCR to further re-focus itself on its core mandate and take a facilitating role, fostering planning and implementation of development activities.

In Ethiopia, NGOs welcome the forthcoming adoption of the revised Refugee Proclamation. It will provide an essential legal basis to operationalize the CRRF. We also appreciate the dedication to achieve progress demonstrated through the launch process. However, more needs to be done to establish the required buy-in from local stakeholders. To ensure consensus-building, NGOs believe sub-national implementation requires thorough planning and should address complex local development challenges. NGOs also strongly support a further development of the pledges beyond quantitative targets to also encompass quality benchmarks. We support broadening the scope of basic services beyond health and nutrition to also include WASH, shelter, energy and other social services.

In Djibouti, NGOs welcome the Steering Committee launch while regretting limited representation of host community, INGOs and line ministries to date. The National Action Plan is a good starting point, but needs a funding and coordination strategy allowing different actors to contribute to its goals. Excluding INGOs from coordination led to inadequate hand-over of service delivery functions to the Health Ministry resulting in service and protection gaps. We recommend engaging civil society organizations more systematically in the CRRF roll-out.

NGOs welcome recent decisions by Kenya, Zambia, Chad and Rwanda to implement the CRRF and stand ready to partner in the roll-outs.

Finally, we again encourage UNHCR and States to champion the CRRF outside Africa and Central America. For example, we encourage to use the CRRF and GCR to prepare a new, multi-stakeholder, iteration of the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees. Similarly, in the Middle East, we expect the GCR to enhance the 3RP framework and national Compacts. In South-east Asia, we believe
governments and UNHCR should translate the CRRF into policy and response to the Rohingya situation.

A detailed version of this intervention is available on icvanetwork.org

Thank you