EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE
HIGH COMMISSIONER’S PROGRAMME
STANDING COMMITTEE
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NGO statement on the global compact on refugees and on preparations for the first
Global Refugee Forum

Dear Chair,

This statement was drafted through a wide consultation with NGOs.

In December, NGOs warmly welcomed the General Assembly overwhelming endorsement of the Refugee Compact and signaled their readiness to contribute to implementation. The Compact was developed through a series of inclusive consultations, necessarily leading to a compromise document but also to strong collective ownership and a common vision to address forced displacement challenges.

Entering the implementation phase, NGOs believe that collective ownership should be maintained. This is the beginning of a new process, where partnership remains fundamental to give practical meaning to the Compact’s objectives and mechanisms. Indeed, the responsibility-sharing arrangements outlined in the Compact are still rather vague. Yet, it is crucial that they deliver and the first Global Refugee Forum will surely be a crucial event in this perspective.

NGOs have four core expectations for the Forum:

1. It must deliver pledges leading to concrete positive changes in the lives of refugees and host communities. This requires that pledging is done against specific challenges and gaps in existing refugee situations. Concretely, we suggest that in each major refugee host country, all stakeholders come together under the host government leadership to define what policy changes, funding requirements, investments and third country solutions are needed to attain, for example, refugee self-reliance and integrated service delivery by 2023. National stakeholders would make their own pledges against those gaps and seek matching support and partnerships with international stakeholders at the Refugee Forum.

2. The Forum should increase preparedness capacity to respond to new refugee situations by generating more flexible and unearmarked funding and surge-capacities.

3. A credible system for monitoring and following-up on pledges must be established and endorsed by States at the Forum.

4. A set of indicators should be established to measure progress on the Compact’s four objectives. Solid indicators are essential to ensure accountability. We recommend establishing a set of targets and indicators allowing multiple stakeholders to deliver against the Objectives.

NGOs stand ready to support preparations for a Global Refugee Forum that delivers these results. We are looking to States and UNHCR lead in designing multi-stakeholder preparations at country, regional and global level and we are eager to contribute and develop complementary advocacy in this perspective.

At country and regional level, NGOs can inform national or regional arrangements and comprehensive plans to generate outcomes for the GCR objectives. Refugees and host communities should also be enabled to help define gaps and set pledging targets. Lastly, NGOs are ready to make their own pledges in partnership with others. We particularly believe that joint commitments can bring a multiplier effect and thus contribute to the much-needed additionality.
Globally, NGOs expect to be associated to the development of the pledging template. We welcome UNHCR’s decision to organize multi-stakeholder Preparatory Meetings for the Forum and look forward to participating. NGOs also welcome the initiative of carving out time within the 2019 UNHCR-NGO Consultations to discuss the GCR implementation and planning for the Forum. We will work to make this a major landmark in the process.

On the GCR indicators, NGOs believe that to be effective, they need to be coupled with set targets aligned with the SDGs and a periodical evaluation of GCR outcomes. Indicators should be based on a shared understanding of collective outcomes to avoid diverging interpretations. Indicators and collective outcomes should be based on established refugee rights and draw on existing benchmarks for achieving solutions to displacement, including the Durable Solutions Indicator Library and International Recommendations for Refugee Statistics. States and UNHCR should also draw from NGO-led initiatives, including the Refugee Response Index, the Self-Reliance Initiative and Minimum Economic Recovery Standards. Indeed, to maintain collective ownership, indicators should be agreed through inclusive exchanges. NGOs look forward to further engaging in this discussion.

Other GCR elements also need to be collectively defined, particularly the resettlement strategy, Support Platforms, and the Asylum Capacity Support Group. NGOs call for mechanisms to allow for contributions into the emerging ‘workstreams’, including from refugee and host communities in all their diversity. It will also be important to ensure coherence between various GCR elements and to avoid creating parallel processes that may take up time and resources.

Moreover, NGOs continue to regret that the Compact does not sufficiently consider IDPs, although many of its provisions are consistent with IDP responses and can be applied in those contexts. NGOs support ongoing efforts to bring a global focus to the plight of IDPs such as the GP20 Plan of Action. We also support the idea of a High-Level Panel on IDPs and call for progress on this issue.

Similarly, the Compact acknowledges the interplay between environmental degradation, natural disasters and refugee movements. It also envisages “measures to assist those forcibly displaced by natural disasters”. Such provisions should be considered as the Compact can contribute to improving adaptation measures, including through mobility and protection mechanisms. This also calls for ensuring complementarity between the two Compacts, especially if we are to better address complex mixed migration realities.

Finally, let’s remember that the CRRF is an integral part of the Compact. As such, it should remain a major focus and be mainstreamed in refugee responses worldwide through the GCR implementation. We hope that UNHCR’s Two-Year Progress Assessment will help inform the way forward. It will also be essential to look at how the Compact’s implementation will be complemented by other processes, including the New Way of Working and the EU’s nexus approach, which bear similarities with the CRRF and GCR.

In conclusion, NGOs consider the GCR as a major achievement that can help re-shape refugee responses. However, this will not happen overnight and will require sustained political commitment and engagement from all stakeholders. NGOs will provide strong contributions, in the spirit of the whole-of-society and collective ownership.

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

Thank you.