

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE
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NGO Protection Statement
Agenda Item 4(a)

Mister Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This statement is delivered on behalf of a wide range of non-governmental organizations. It has been drafted in consultation with, and aims to reflect the diversity of views of, the NGO community.

General Reflections

Mister Chair, 2016 has been marked by a series of high level political summits around the world on finding concrete solutions to the refugee crisis. Many of us in this room and others preparing this statement have worked hard to ensure the success of these initiatives.

On 19 September, all 193 UN Member States reached consensus on the New York Declaration during the UN General Assembly Summit for Refugees and Migrants. Through this agreement and summit, heads of state and government leaders agreed to:

- Reaffirm existing human rights laws and frameworks;
- Protect the human rights of all refugees and migrants, regardless of status;
- Implement a global campaign to end xenophobia;
- Develop a Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration by 2018;
- and
- Develop more equitable sharing of responsibility for hosting and supporting the world's refugees; among other things.

On 20 September, President Obama's Leaders Summit on Refugees secured commitments around resettlement, financial support, and refugee jobs and education. These advances in refugee protection have the potential for profound impact for millions of people in situations of extreme vulnerability to abuse, discrimination, and neglect around the world, but only if they are implemented with expedience, thoughtfulness, and political resolve.

Unfortunately, by mid September, nearly 3,200 migrants had died in 2016 in the Mediterranean alone. Given the urgency of these matters—and the fraying of families, communities, and societies worldwide—we urge states to take bold, coordinated action to ensure the protection of refugees around the world.

Recommendations

The real and immediate test of this year's political advances is whether the international community can make a difference on the ground for the millions of refugees, IDPs and stateless persons in need of protection, safe passage, solidarity, inclusion, decent work and livelihoods. We urge states, in partnership with the UN and civil society, to translate the commitments in *the New York Declaration* into a rights-based, age- and gender-sensitive implementation plan that would include the elements below.

- 1. Take immediate action to safeguard lives and fundamental human rights:**
 - a. provide safe and regular routes for refugees to leave conflict and persecution;
 - b. stop criminalizing and detaining refugees and migrants for irregular entry or stay and immediately end, the detention of all children and their families;
 - c. remove long term barriers to freedom of movement;
 - d. ensure access to protection, services, jobs and quality education for all refugee;
 - e. prevent and resolve cases of statelessness;
 - f. provide regular and safe pathways for migrants at all skill levels with full rights, labor protection, decent work, family reunification.

- 2. Enact equitable and predictable responsibility-sharing and refugee protection mechanisms,** by working with the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) to (a) apply the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework to solve **current and protracted refugee situations** across the world at the earliest opportunity; and (b) develop a **Global Compact for Refugees no later than by 2018**. States must without delay pledge and change national policies to:
 - a. respect the **right to seek asylum** and reduce barriers to access to asylum;
 - b. increase **annual resettlement** places to at the very least meet the annual resettlement needs identified by UNHCR, as well as expanding additional pathways such as family reunion, private sponsorships, and work, student and humanitarian visas;
 - c. ensure **local inclusion of refugees** and access to basic services, including quality education as soon as possible for children and young people, vocational training, decent work opportunities, and labor and employment rights; and
 - d. provide predictable and adequate **humanitarian assistance** as well as development funding to support displaced people and communities hosting them..

- 3. Review national border policies to uphold the human rights of all people at international borders, and commit to developing and implementing gender and age-sensitive guidelines to protect migrants in vulnerable situations,** drawing upon existing and emerging guidance from international agencies, including UNHCR tools and Guidelines on International Protection, and the OHCHR Recommended Principles and Guidelines on Migrants at International Borders. These guidelines

should be incorporated directly into the Global Compact for Refugees. In addition, governments should review their bilateral and regional agreements to ensure that they not only avoid undermining the protection needs of refugees, but bolster them, and ensure that development aid is not conditioned by agreements on borders and readmission.

4. **End the practice of child immigration detention in accordance with the best interests of the child**, including through supporting the Inter-Agency Working Group (IAWG) to End Child Immigration Detention, and through making tangible pledges to end child immigration detention and to implement rights-based alternatives to detention for the entire family that protect the rights, dignity and welfare of refugee and migrant children.
5. **Implement policies and vigorous campaigns at national and local levels to counter xenophobia, discrimination and racism** and improve refugee inclusion into local communities, and review underlying policies that demonize and criminalize refugees and migrants. Instead, policies should support inclusive and diverse societies and allow for safe and decent paths for migration.
6. **Agree on concrete measures to improve the protection and assistance for internally displaced people.** As states strengthen their commitments in the global *2030 Agenda* to leave no-one behind - including every migrant, refugee and displaced woman, man and child regardless of status and location - they must not forget people who are displaced within their own borders, and urgently commit to reviewing and improving protection and assistance for these groups.
7. **Take high-level action and agree on concrete measures to better protect aid workers from deliberate attacks, which hinder the delivery of principled humanitarian aid to populations in need.** It is the very principle of humanity that drives humanitarian actors towards people who need life-saving support. All stakeholders should actively engage to make sure basic services effectively and safely reach civilians already affected by conflict.

Given conflict disaster, climate and environmental degradation, and economic inequality worldwide, the numbers of vulnerable refugees, migrants and internationally displaced people will keep rising. They may lose many things when they move but they should never lose their human rights and fundamental dignity.

Thus, we call upon the states present to turn their bold commitments into clear, committed action.

This statement will be made available on ICVA network at www.icvanetwork.org