

**NGO Intervention on the programme of action and the principal modalities for burden-
and responsibility-sharing**

Agenda item 1

Dear Chairperson, distinguished delegates,

This intervention has been drafted following wide consultations with NGOs.

We recognise UNHCR's efforts towards the adoption of a Global Compact on Refugees, and appreciate the sustained engagement with the NGO community. We welcome the zero draft of the Programme of Action, a vital part of the Compact, and the opportunity to offer feedback.

To start with general comments, we share the view that the Compact's success will be determined by concrete improvements in the lives of refugees, stateless persons and host communities. To do so, the Compact will need to transform the international community's approach to protection, assistance and durable solutions for refugees. The Programme of Action should therefore be realistic, but also put forward collective ambitions and objectives.

The Programme of Action's commitment to the refugee protection regime is reassuring. We nevertheless expected stronger references to agreed normative frameworks, particularly to non-*refoulement*, the core of refugee protection. The text also needs stronger references to essential human rights standards, including women and child rights, access to justice and proposed actions to prevent and resolve statelessness.

We appreciate that the zero draft underlines the need for predictable and equitable responsibility sharing, but we reaffirm that the word 'burden' does not reflect the opportunities and benefits refugees can generate. Moreover, we note that explicit reference to resettlement is missing from this part of the text, thus putting emphasis mainly on financial dimensions. We strongly believe that responsibility sharing should be a collective effort, exercised not just by interested States or those closest to humanitarian crises.

Going more in details, a timeline for responsibility-sharing arrangements should be provided, starting with immediate measures that States could take, and build upon those to achieve long-term objectives. The international community must also affirm its obligation to address the root causes of displacement.

We also recognise efforts to build on the Sustainable Development Goals. To 'leave no one behind', refugees and persons of concern have to be included in national development plans.

But we must also acknowledge that humanitarian assistance and principles will not always line up with national development strategies and emergency assistance must be prioritised when refugees and stateless persons are in urgent need of relief.

When mobilising additional financing, we understand that financial and development institutions are key stakeholders. We remain concerned, however, that refugee-related development funds may mainly be provided as loans: performing a global collective good, host countries should have increased access to grants. Other financing avenues such as debt relief, favourable trade terms for refugee-hosting countries or tapping into frozen assets should also be explored. We also propose that ‘solidarity conferences’ go beyond financial aspects, and that transparent mechanisms are put in place to allocate and monitor pledges.

We recognize past NGO recommendations in the zero draft, but also recommend that future iterations provide more details, particularly on the global platform: more information is needed on activation mechanisms and triggers, composition and its potential contribution to strengthening political commitments. We also suggest that refugees, civil society, financial institutions and relevant international organisations be associated to the platform.

Moreover, regional inter-governmental organisations and NGO networks are making important contributions by reinforcing cross-regional cooperation in order to ensure a continuum of care for displaced people. If the Compact is to be successful in achieving its objectives, their crucial role should be further highlighted.

NGOs actually expected more emphasis on the whole-of-society approach and still consider it useful to elaborate on what this entails, emphasizing a culture of partnership rather than a mechanism of support or advice. In this perspective, the Principles of Partnership should be referenced in the Programme of Action.

Finally, Mr. Chair, we emphasise that it is in everyone’s interest to ensure that refugees and other persons of concern are active agents in the Compact. Promoting meaningful participation of refugees and stateless persons will only strengthen refugee responses, making them more sustainable and equitable. Explicit mention of refugee-led, stateless-led and community-based organisations should therefore be made. Beyond implementation, refugees, including youth, women and girls, should also be actively involved in decision-, policy-making and planning processes. This will also strengthen accountability to refugees and affected populations.

A detailed version of this intervention is available on icvanetwork.org. We also encourage you to consult comments on the zero-draft issued by several NGOs.

Thank you.