

NGO intervention on meeting needs and supporting communities

Agenda item 2

Dear Chairperson,

This intervention has been drafted through wide consultations with NGOs.

First, we commend progress made, including the new focus on food security and statelessness. We also appreciate the emphasis on harnessing refugees' potential while moving beyond encampment policies. In short, this section may allow better fulfilment of refugees' rights, including their social and cultural rights. In this perspective, supporting national systems is crucial but it must lead to comprehensive inclusion of refugees. Related measures should also be accompanied by stronger references to freedom of movement for refugees and we repeat that investing in refugees' skills better prepares them for all durable solutions, not just returns.

In addition, although stronger complementarities between emergency response and development cooperation may yield positive results, we recall that humanitarian assistance must remain needs-based, accountable to refugees and principled in line with international humanitarian law.

On **education**, we stress the need for inclusive approaches and welcome the reference to 'safe schools', which could also mention removing safety-related or practical obstacles to attendance. Moreover, expanding access for refugees will require supporting inclusive national education systems and long-term planning through predictable funding. Emphasis must be put on universally recognised quality education, which facilitates complementary pathways. Access to education for children and youth living with disabilities must also receive special attention.

We welcome the emphasis on access to **jobs and livelihoods** and encourage support for professional development, entrepreneurship, and skills retention, which contribute to durable solutions. Access to productive, safe and equitable work opportunities must be accompanied with strong and enforceable protection safeguards to prevent exploitation. The Compact should include explicit references to both States' 'duty to protect' and business' 'responsibility to respect' labour and human rights. Refugees must be made aware of their rights and have access to social protection.

We note positive additions on **health** – particularly related to psycho-social support and maternal and infant health – although reference to health as a human right must be clearly made. We also call for further investing in mental health for refugees. Moreover, a number of NGOs – not all – consider that basic services for refugees should provide access to sexual and reproductive health. Support for expanding national service delivery should also include building new health facilities and training health workers and interpreters, especially those focusing on children and women.

We appreciate the broader **gender** considerations and the recognition of specific obstacles women and girls face in fulfilling meaningful roles and realizing their rights. More emphasis must be given to their safety and security including combating societal gender prejudices and strengthening accountability for SGBV. Additionally, the situation-specific vulnerabilities of boys, men, and other persons whose respective situations expose them to discrimination and violence must be addressed.

We welcome efforts to preserve the environment, and to develop sustainable waste management and energy sources. Disaster-risk reduction strategies and climate change mitigation and adaptation measures must also guide refugee-related infrastructure construction. These efforts must ensure refugees enjoy adequate standards of living. Safe Access to Fuel and Energy programmes could also be mentioned. These help avoid environmental degradation and also assist in preventing gender-based violence.

We commend the inclusion of **food security and nutrition** considerations. Ensuring people have access to nutritious food and safe drinking water also contributes to preparedness. Along with food assistance and nutrition-sensitive interventions, sustainable approaches require that host countries are supported to include refugees in unconditional cash transfers, social safety nets and public distribution systems.

Civil registration, a key element of international protection, is imperative for individuals and families to access most educational, social, economic and cultural services. Birth registration is also a major protection tool for children. Support to host states must ensure that women, children and others experiencing vulnerability are identified and provided adapted information to access civil registration.

Finally, civil registration is vital to prevent **statelessness**. We underline that discriminatory nationality laws drive statelessness and forced displacement. A commitment to rescind such laws will contribute to responsibility sharing.

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

Thank you.