

**NGO intervention on solutions**

**Agenda item 3**

Dear Chairperson,

This intervention has been drafted following wide consultations with NGOs.

The solutions section has benefitted from greater details, and we welcome the mention of pursuing the three durable solutions as well as other pathways for admission to third countries.

More specifically, on **support for countries of origin and voluntary repatriation**, we welcome ensuring the exercise of free and informed choice and emphasis on safe, dignified and sustainable returns. However, language should be bolstered through explicit reference to *non-refoulement* as the overall guiding framework on voluntary returns. We also add that voluntary repatriation may not always be the preferred solution for refugees: preferences are subjective, and vary in time and space. And we remain concerned by the indication that voluntary repatriation is not necessarily conditioned on political solutions. This is not necessary as a safeguard to refugees' right to return and may lead to incentivised premature returns.

Development support, while essential, will still need to be complemented by efforts to restore political stability and basic human rights in countries of origin to ensure returns are safe and sustainable. Furthermore, safeguards will need to be in place to ensure development assistance is not used to feed violence and perpetuate impunity. In these situations, humanitarian aid will continue to be vital. Yet most humanitarian response plans for countries of origin remain abysmally underfunded.

Moreover, it is imperative that refugees and returnees are part of decision-making processes affecting their future. Family unity and best interests' determination procedure should remain fundamental principles guiding decisions on returns. Other considerations that ensure refugees are able to make an informed choice should include access to independent information and counselling and the possibility to undertake go-and-see visits. Accountability for crimes and restoration of land and property rights will be equally important. Essential services for returnees should be readily accessible and gender, age and disability-responsive. Continuity of protection and care also needs to be guaranteed.

**Resettlement** is a key mechanism for refugee protection, durable solutions and responsibility-sharing. We therefore welcome the proposal to expand the support base beyond traditional resettlement countries and call for a substantial increase in resettlement places. **Resettlement**

programmes should prioritize the most vulnerable and those at risk, including women victims of SGBV, children and people living with disabilities. Best interest of the child and extended family reunification schemes must guide resettlement decisions. We also request more details on the process and timeline of the three-year strategy, including expectations about the NGO community. Details and clarity on the resettlement core group, and how this links to the Global Support Platform, global refugee summits and solidarity conferences would also be welcome.

On **local integration**, we welcome most modifications highlighting refugees' constructive links with their country of asylum and potential to make positive societal contributions. The 2005 ExCom Conclusion on Local Integration provides useful guidance in this regard. Integration should build on innovative partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders to maximize the use of financial and human resources. Host States must, however, receive strong support to integrate refugees in national development plans. Importantly, States should also receive assistance to invest in promoting positive coexistence between refugees and host communities through combating xenophobia and discrimination.

On **other pathways for admission to third countries**, we welcome the inclusion of humanitarian admission programmes, community sponsorship and scholarships. We request details on plans to “significantly increase the availability and predictability of other pathways for admission within three years”, including concrete targets. To this effect, States should liberalise their existing migration and humanitarian entry settings to the extent possible. More importantly, we emphasise that offering complementary pathways should not result in diminishing efforts in pursuit of durable solutions, especially resettlement.

In conclusion, offering refugees a good start will ensure that they will contribute abundantly to our societies, revive their lives and the communities that they join. International cooperation must therefore lead to full restoration of refugees' human rights. The role of national laws, policies and practices will be crucial in promoting the quality and sustainability of durable solutions. We encourage publicising good practices that promote sustainable refugee protection.

A detailed version of this intervention is available on [icvanetwork.org](http://icvanetwork.org).

Thank you.