

NGO intervention on the final draft of the global compact on refugees

Dear Chairperson,

Eighteen months ago, we embarked on a multi-stakeholder process to transform the way we address large-scale movements and protracted situations. Much effort went into defining a collective vision for a world, where those forced to flee can enjoy protection and fundamental rights, and where host States can count on international solidarity.

We commend UNHCR's efforts to keep our collective ambition high, while accommodating diverging views. Progress was made in several key areas, particularly on operationalising responsibility-sharing; mainstreaming age, gender, diversity and disability considerations and fostering participation of affected populations.

While not legally binding, the compact now carries the moral compulsion to transform the lives of refugees and host communities. It should therefore set new standards for action.

Nevertheless, much work remains to define and coordinate the various pieces into a coherent whole. We need to ensure the emergence of robust responsibility-sharing arrangements that complement each other, bring additionality, remain sustainable and avoid politicization.

Although the compact gradually took a development orientation, we emphasize the continued centrality of protection, solutions and of humanitarian principles. As we speak, durable solutions are still a pipedream for millions of refugees, while thousands more are denied their fundamental right to seek asylum. Conflict rages in the Middle-East, monsoons loom menacingly on refugee camps in South Asia, hundreds of people perish in the Mediterranean, while others flee violence in Central America only to encounter prisons and wrenching separations. States

should guarantee people's right to seek asylum and respect non-*refoulement*. Moreover, all persons in need of protection should be able to access it, including those fleeing adverse impacts of climate change and disasters. Countries facing such challenges must also benefit from responsibility-sharing arrangements.

We therefore envision the compact to result in robust protection and durable solutions; lead to timely, effective and inclusive responses; and encourage meaningful participation and sustainable partnerships. The non-exhaustive spirit of the compact also applies to protection guarantees, meaning that States must adhere to protection principles, even if some are not fully detailed in the compact. NGOs will continue to advocate strongly from this perspective, holding ourselves and others accountable.

The compact's strength will hinge on its capacity to generate additional resources, primarily through the Global Refugee Forum. There should be a solidified and enhanced civil society role in the Forum, bi-annual meetings and other arrangements. NGOs will consider creating platforms for this purpose. Modalities for participation of affected populations are also needed, such as a space to feed into the Forum, helping to identify gaps, making commitments and participating in follow-up.

On implementation, NGOs recognize that responses must also go beyond traditional approaches. Legal and policy measures aimed at enhancing refugee rights must complement operational responses and improve socio-economic conditions. We also welcome progress in mainstreaming disability and youth considerations but continue to regret that the best interest of the child does not feature under durable solutions. Moreover, noting the focus on 'women and girls' instead of 'gender', we highlight the imperative of unpacking gender-based norms and power dynamics affecting all persons. Several NGOs also regret that the GCR does not refer to often lifesaving sexual and reproductive health services.

Going forward, it will be vital to ensure complementarity between the two compacts and increase operational coordination between all stakeholders. We also urge strengthening the GCR application in mixed migration situations, which represent an essential operational reality in ensuring refugee protection and assistance.

Finally, measuring progress through a credible monitoring and evaluation framework will be crucial. We appreciate that room was made for mid-term reviews and welcome the reference to the development of indicators. We underline that the four objectives must translate into people-centred and collectively defined outcomes and targets, fully aligned with the responsibility-sharing arrangements. Those must encapsulate concrete improvements in the lives of refugees. NGOs remain eager to provide expertise in the development of accountability tools and mechanisms.

In closing, over the past months, new ideas emerged – some more crystallised than others – and we must maintain efforts to shape these approaches. NGOs will continue engaging in fine-tuning the compact’s building blocks. We are eager to start a conversation on modalities for participation.

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