

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE
HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME
STANDING COMMITTEE
81ST MEETING
5-7 July 2021

NGO statement on the preparations for the first High-Level Officials Meeting

Dear Chair,

This statement is delivered on behalf of a wide range of NGOs.

We appreciate the opportunity for continued engagement in preparations for the High-Level Officials Meeting of the Global Refugee Forum, which will be the first opportunity to take stock of progress against the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees since its affirmation in December 2018. This High-Level Meeting will also be the first time GCR stakeholders gather again to assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Compacts' implementation.

We wish to thank UNHCR for its efforts to keep stakeholders informed on meeting preparations through its briefings, the circulation of key planning documents, such as the draft programme and the list of stocktaking events, and the engagement of a variety of stakeholders at global and regional level, including refugee-led networks. As the HLOM draws closer, NGOs remain strongly committed to engaging actively with UNHCR and other stakeholders to ensure the meeting yields **concrete and sustainable outcomes** for refugees and their host communities.

Regarding the substantive priorities for the High-Level Meeting, we make **three main recommendations**:

1. Align the meeting's priorities and expected outcomes with the GCR objectives

So far UNHCR has proposed three priorities for the meeting. Building on many interventions made in response to this proposal, NGOs recommend structuring the HLOM around the four original objectives of the Compact: i) ease pressures on host countries; (ii) enhance refugee self-reliance; (iii) expand access to third-country solutions; and (iv) support conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity. This change will not only ensure higher consistency between Refugee Forums and HLOMs but also better contribute to the ultimate goal of the Compact, namely, a more equitable and predictable responsibility-sharing to better protect and assist refugees and support host countries and communities. NGOs believe the priorities identified by UNHCR at the April briefing should be integrated into these four pillars, rather than set a new direction for the post-GCR implementation process.

Regarding the expected outcomes, NGOs would like more clarity on the overall vision for the HLOM and the required strategy to turn it into action. What we have seen so far is a wide variety of preparatory events, some of which have already taken place, without an apparent common thread. Learning from the first GRF's preparatory process, and the GRF itself, the HLOM must not become an end in itself nor generate a myriad of uncoordinated initiatives without focus. NGOs are ready to contribute to a High-Level Officials Meeting that is intentionally designed to deliver concrete improvements in the lives of refugees and their host communities. Therefore, we would like to receive more detailed information on what is expected post-HLOM, and how UNHCR envisions for the next two years.

2. Anchor meeting discussions in monitoring and accountability

The GCR states that High-Level Officials Meetings will allow for mid-term review of progress and facilitate regular stock-taking. NGOs wish to see this important function reflected in the meeting's core programme, which currently only marginally takes stock of progress made since GCR adoption. This leaves most of the review to preliminary events, such as the launch of the GCR indicator report in November. While NGOs welcome an early launch of the report, we believe the HLOM should also devote adequate time for a meaningful discussion on the report findings in line with its original purpose. Only with a full understanding of what has worked and what hasn't in implementing the GCR objectives can we hope for a more forward-looking direction.

NGOs look forward to further updates on any preliminary findings from the GCR indicator reporting exercise.

3. Develop a shared strategy for matching complementary pledges and accelerating their implementation

NGOs recognise the great efforts by UNHCR, Member States and other stakeholders, alliances, and networks to advance the pledges implementation and we look forward to a comprehensive update on their progress. Many among us are also proactively leading on the implementation of several pledges. For example, the Refugee Self-Reliance Initiative and 15 partner agencies presented a [joint pledge](#) to promote refugee self-reliance. This pledge includes commitments to: (1) expand the use and support for the [Self-Reliance Index](#) to measure self-reliance; (2) increase access to self-reliance programming and; (3) advocate to ensure an enabling environment conducive for self-reliance. The initiative continues to make significant progress through the global roll-out of the Self-Reliance Index in 14 countries, increasing access to self-reliance programming for thousands of refugees and conducting and disseminating research that highlights the benefits of self-reliance.

Going forward, we would also like more information from UNHCR on the matching exercise undertaken in recent months to ensure policy pledges by refugee-hosting countries are supported by complementary financial pledges by donor governments. More transparency and clarity would help better understand how civil society and other stakeholders can contribute to this crucial exercise.

To facilitate inclusive engagement more generally, we welcome the convening of various regional events to support more geographically comprehensive input into preparations for the HLOM, through collaboration between UNHCR, NGOs, refugee and diaspora networks, and other stakeholders. The robust participation of refugees and host community representatives should be pursued in these fora, and their outcomes fed into the pledging process and capture of positive practices.

We also welcome the initiative taken by some States to convene consultations at country levels and strongly encourage the rapid expansion of this practice, for which we offer our support. We recall that a guiding principle of the GCR is that national ownership and leadership are key to its implementation.

In conclusion, NGOs reiterate their firm support for the first HLOM. Inclusive participation, collaboration, full implementation of existing pledges and robust accountability will be fundamental to its success.

Further details are available at icvanetwork.org

Thank you.