

NGO Joint Statement – ORAL delivery version
High-Level Officials Meeting, 14-15 December 2021

Dear Chair,

As the main pledging group at the Global Refugee Forum, NGOs appreciate the opportunity to present perspectives and recommendations today.

The affirmation of the Refugee Compact represented a strong commitment to solidarity, collective action and international protection. Three years on, displacement continues to grow; COVID-19 has endangered the livelihoods, health, and protection of displaced and stateless populations; while funding gaps persist. The international environment is also fraught with trends and externalization practices bent on undermining the Refugee Convention.

It is therefore vital to reassert the Compact's importance and show that it can contribute to solutions. NGOs, therefore, **first** highlight the need to:

- Achieve the Three-Year Strategy's vision to benefit 3 million refugees by 2028, with complementary pathways being truly additional to – not competing with – resettlement.
- Analyze the Support Platforms' performance, value-added, and potential for replication.
- Consider the impact of the Asylum Capacity Support Group and how it can represent a model for pledges matching.

For these mechanisms, it is important to assess the space afforded to NGOs, which seems rarely prioritized, as manifest with the Afghanistan Support Platform. Partnerships with and funding to refugee-led organizations also remain insufficient, waiting for institutionalized mechanisms.

Second, we highlight NGOs' efforts in implementing pledges despite budget limitations and COVID-19 challenges. We also stress the need to further advance the rights and prospects of refugees and host communities.

While the pandemic highlighted the value of pledges made by refugee-led organizations, some NGOs followed through on commitments to support RLOs' access to resources. Several agencies worked to advance opportunities for displaced populations and host communities to become self-reliant. Moreover, many NGOs pivoted to establish remote legal services and partner with law firms to deliver legal assistance. Covid-19 also severely impacted the implementation of GRF pledges on education, increased children's vulnerability, and highlighted a protection emergency that requires increased State action.

Overall, based their experience NGOs highlight the importance of:

- Working in partnership to reach shared goals and strengthen policies' design and implementation.
- Documenting and sharing learning from pledges implementation with a wider community to build an evidence base of effective policies and practices.
- Rooting priorities in the reality of the diverse communities for – and with whom— we work.

Third, moving forward we must strengthen the GCR arrangements, measure and consolidate tangible results. It will also be crucial to improve preparations for the second Forum, in line with the Compact's multi-stakeholder approach. To this end, we highlight the following priorities:

1) Identify 2023 GRF themes:

Based on our experience we particularly consider that:

- We need to address the larger protection crisis; deepen the ‘protection capacity’ focus beyond reception and admission, and address specific protection needs of people of all age, gender, and diversity.
- Education for the most marginalized must remain a priority, keeping in sight the GCR commitment to minimize the time refugee children spend out of school.
- Statelessness must be mainstreamed as a key cross-cutting issue for the next GRF, building resilience, solidarity, prevention, and solutions.
- In identifying pledging thematic focuses, systemic participation of refugees and stateless populations is needed, including children and youth.
- Meaningful participation should also ensure space for national civil society organizations to fulfil their role.

2) Ensure an impactful pledging process:

Redesigned co-sponsorship groups can be useful provided they are more inclusive and sustainable. They should stick to themes insufficiently addressed in 2019 and help set-up a matching system ahead of the GRF, thus driving more collective pledges.

To generate an impactful compendium of pledges, new and existing commitments will need to be better defined, based on costed plans and aligned with the GCR indicators. Pledges should also be as result-orientated as possible.

3) Ensure a transparent follow up and review process:

As any pledging system should include a robust accountability mechanism, pledges must be framed to include clear deliverables, timelines or milestones so that progress can be tracked.

In this perspective, UNHCR should leverage its leadership at country level and work with governments and other actors to monitor the Compact’s implementation. At global level, the GRF Dashboard needs to be updated and simplified, especially to encourage increased partnerships amongst pledgers.

In conclusion, NGOs urge all stakeholders to ensure current pledges are effectively implemented and invite you to join our early mobilization towards a more inclusive and impactful second GRF.