

Third Informal Briefing on the Global Refugee Forum (28 September 2020)

NGO Statement

- Dear Chair,
- Thank you for giving another opportunity to NGOs to express, collectively, their perspectives on the follow-up to the Global Refugee Forum (GRF), nine months after the first such forum.
- This is important as we are worried some momentum may be drifting in the follow-up to the GRF, particularly in the multi-stakeholder engagement.
- In this perspective, we suggest a reflection is needed on new modes and spaces for this multi-stakeholder engagement, with enhanced participation from the field, possibly building on past and ongoing co-sponsorship groups. This should keep alive a sectoral multi-stakeholder monitoring and facilitating role through larger participation.
- Some dynamics already exist: In June, at the second informal briefing on the Global Refugee Forum, UNHCR highlighted that some co-sponsorship groups lived on, in other forms, particularly on Energy & Infrastructures, Jobs & Livelihoods, and Education. The effects of COVID-19 on refugees also call for other themes to be emphasized: health and protection among others.
- In the current context, there is still need for groups to lead by example; share thinking; act as advocates; exchange good practices in areas of focus and share information about needs, gaps, and challenges in the area of focus.¹
- NGOs welcome the agenda item updating on pledges from the High Level Segment on Statelessness, and in this regard also commend the virtual statelessness mini-Retreat recently hosted by UNHCR as a good example of how to engage NGOs in the post-GRF pledge monitoring and implementation process. We also highlight the need for statelessness to be more systematically integrated in GRF follow-up processes, including by mainstreaming the issue through broader protection-themed initiatives such as the Asylum Support Capacity Group, and by ensuring adequate resourcing to support statelessness work under UNHCR's mandate – including leading up to, and after, the #Ibelong campaign ends in 2024.
- At large, regarding the progress on the initiatives launched at the GRF and as set out in the Global Compact on Refugees, NGOs are eager to be much better informed and associated to the work of the three Support Platforms and the Asylum Capacity Support Group.
- For the Asylum Capacity Support Group, NGOs welcome the issuance of “The guide to working modalities”. In particular, the recognition that “civil society (...) are often well placed to support initiatives aimed at improving a national asylum system, UNHCR encourages states to involve relevant national and/or regional stakeholders in preparing a request for asylum capacity support”. In addition, NGOs stand ready to support information-sharing prior to submitting a request as well as matching and assessing impacts.
- Within the current pandemic context, NGOs would like to highlight the need to ensure that States do not use COVID-19 as a justification to close borders, not fulfill their pledges, and deny the right to apply for asylum. The focus needs to be on supporting the Global South, especially countries in Latin America, which have been most affected by COVID-19.
- Regarding the Global Academic Interdisciplinary Network, we support the importance to understand the Global South not only as an object of study but as a place that produces knowledge. Especially in the pandemic context, in which people connect mainly online, the GAIN should be used to allow refugee scientists and scholars from the Global South to participate more in academic discussions.

¹ UNHCR, *Co-sponsorship arrangements*, 1 July 2019:

<https://www.unhcr.org/events/conferences/5d1a136d7/co-sponsorship-arrangements-5d1a136d7.html>

- Regarding the Three-Year Strategy on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways, the impact of COVID-19 in the fulfillment of related pledges is concerning and should be monitored. There is still a need to better structure relocation programs. This would include clear mechanisms and responsibilities as well as improved procedures.
- Overall, we believe that it would be useful for all stakeholders to know more about the roadmap for the follow-up of the pledges and contributions mentioned during the second briefing last June. NGOs continue² to consider this should include a systematic and predictable approach, involving the UNHCR Regional Bureaus, identifying regional and national architectures for follow-up. A document, detailing the various steps, mechanisms, and engagement options should be developed collectively, including with refugees.
- Thank you.

² See NGO statement delivered for the Second Informal Briefing, 11 June 2020:
<https://www.icvanetwork.org/follow-global-compact-refugees-and-2019-global-refugee-forum-resource-page>