

Short NGO Statement: informal briefing to Member States and other stakeholders on UNHCR's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and operational priorities

Wednesday 22 April, 9:00-11:00

– As Delivered –

- First, we thank UNHCR for the constant dialogue with NGOs since the start of the pandemic.
- UNHCR has been communicative and collaborative, demonstrating a renewed impetus for the Principles of Partnership. NGOs particularly appreciate UNHCR efforts to be a more flexible donor and adapt the collaboration framework.
- We hope that UNHCR's example will be followed by others, including within the UN system.
- NGOs also expect UNHCR flexibility and guidance to be implemented consistently worldwide.
- We take the opportunity to reiterate 5 key messages:
 1. One, protection: We are extremely concerned by the impact of border closures, suspended asylum procedures, and restrictions of movements. We caution about the direct and potentially long-term effects on the lives of refugees and on international legal obligations.
 2. Two, to address protection concerns, ensure continuity of service while respecting do-no-harm, and contribute to the COVID-19 response, NGOs call for humanitarian work to be recognized as essential activities. In particular, AGD considerations, child protection and access to education should be prioritized.
 3. Three, along with Protection we call on reasserting the importance of work on durable solutions. We are concerned by the current suspension of resettlement travels. In the current situation, it remains important to continue planning for solutions.
 4. Four, as front line actors in this global emergency, NGOs urgently need to receive additional funding. While the Global HRP remains underfunded, we hope that the revised Appeal will properly involve NGOs, including local organizations. We are also calling on donors to keep funding existing humanitarian plans.
 5. Five, NGOs believe the GRF momentum should not be lost. GCR arrangements such as the Asylum Capacity Support Group and Support Platforms can be mobilized for increased solidarity and responsibility-sharing in the COVID-19 response. Jobs and Livelihoods pledges can help face socio-economic impacts of COVID-19.
- Thank you.