

NGO statement on the General Debate

Dear Chair,

This statement was prepared in close consultation with a wide range of NGOs and reflects their diverse views.

We must not fall back on the hard-won gains on refugee's rights, particularly on gender equality.

The COVID-19 pandemic and other emerging crises in 2021 showed how progress achieved over the last decade for forcibly displaced people continue to be at risk of major setbacks. Among them, hard-won progress on gender equality and the rights of children, persons with disabilities and LGBTQI+. The accelerated climate crisis is also a major concern with already disproportionate impacts on vulnerable populations. It is likely to trigger more displacements and worsen living conditions for forcibly displaced persons.

In many countries, lockdowns, conflicts, and natural disasters have taken their toll on refugees and internally displaced persons, stateless, in particular women and girls, many of whom face increased violence, struggle to get to employment, are burdened by unpaid care work of family or community members and might never get back to education.

However, despite existing progress in ensuring gender equality and the protection of diverse populations of refugees, support for and implementation of age, gender, and diversity programmes and policies at the community and national levels has been chronically underfunded and not systematically addressed. Seven of eleven top donors allocate barely two per cent of funds to targeted gender equality programming in humanitarian settings.

Looking back to the 2019 Global Refugee Forum, despite commitments to ensuring an AGD approach is fully integrated as a cross-cutting issue, an analysis of the pledges reveals that 70% of the pledges did not mention AGD in any form.

Yet, where challenges exist, opportunities might be unlocked if there is a political will to act. We must urgently ensure that all refugees and people in crisis-affected communities, particularly women and girls, can equitably access COVID-19 vaccinations through their inclusion in national vaccination plans and through the tackling of informal barriers to access. The international community must also ensure that women, girls, and children in all their diversity can access protection, education, health, and economic opportunities. In this regard, we would like to welcome UNHCR's and a few Member States efforts to adapt, ensure visibility, protect, and empower refugee women, girls, and children in all their diversity. We welcome UNHCR's increased leadership in advocating and adapting operations to reflect AGD considerations during the COVID-19 emergency, including its renewed efforts to prevent, mitigate, and respond to gender-based violence and to support refugee women and girls leadership.

The following years are key to ensure that we support inclusive responses for and with refugees in all their diversity. UNHCR and Member States, should accelerate the integration of age, gender, and diversity in their operations and policies and ensure participation in protection, assistance, and solutions. We call on them to:

- Ensure the inclusion and meaningful engagement of all persons of concern to UNHCR in decision-making that affects their lives with further investments, more regular and systematic engagement, and full integration in programme cycles.
- Ensure a strong commitment by UNHCR senior leadership to mainstream AGD in the oversight of all refugee operations and internal displacement situations.
- Enhance the joint collection and analysis by UNHCR and partners of data disaggregated by age, sex, and diversity, as contextually appropriate as possible. Data collection and analysis must go beyond the assessment stage and be followed by concrete action to mainstream AGD considerations into collective response plans.
- UNHCR and donors should strongly advocate for the development of national refugee response plans that are responsive to the needs of women, children in all their diversity, people with disabilities and diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics.
- UNHCR and donor countries should ensure robust investments to accelerate progress on gender equality, particularly to support the active involvement of women and girls and their representative organizations in monitoring, designing, and responding as well as supporting their meaningful participation and leadership.

We must ensure that political momentum is sustained for Internally Displaced Persons.

Furthermore, we are witnessing a key moment for internally displaced persons, as the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement released its final report. We congratulate the Panel and its Secretariat for a process that was inclusive of civil society and internally displaced communities and for its recommendations. Those have the potential, if implemented, to become a game-changer for IDPs. Hence, we emphasize that the international community has a responsibility in advancing prevention, protection, and solutions for internally displaced people, by ensuring financial and political support to the implementation of the Panel's recommendations.

In this regard, UNHCR has an important role to play in pushing for the implementation of the Panel's recommendations. UNHCR could play a leadership role in catalyzing action in the short, medium, and long-term, including by stepping up its advocacy to ensure enhanced political will at the global, regional, and local levels for IDP protection and solutions. UNHCR could also play a role in adjusting and aligning the Panel's recommendations with its policies notably its Policy and Guidance Package on UNHCR's engagement in situations of internal displacement, its Emergency Handbook and Strategic Directions for 2022-2026.

Responsibility for internal displacement across all the UN system must be outlined. For its part, the NGO community stands ready to support the implementation of the High-Level Panel's recommendations, particularly in supporting the meaningful participation of IDPs themselves.

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Thank you.