EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE

HIGH COMMISSIONER’S PROGRAMME

72nd Session

4-8 October 2021

**DRAFT 2**

**NGO statement on the General Debate**

Dear Chair, Ladies, and Gentlemen,

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 around the world 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 Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex (LGBTQI+). The accelerated climate crisis is also a major concern. It has already had disproportionate impacts on vulnerable populations and is likely to trigger more displacements and worsen living conditions for forcibly displaced persons.

In many countries, lockdowns, as well as conflict 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.

At the same time the implementation of age, gender and diversity (AGD) programmes at the community and national level has been chronically underfunded and not systematically addressed across all refugee responses. According to a 2021 report[[1]](#footnote-1) from CARE International, seven of eleven top donors allocate barely two per cent of funds to targeted gender equality programming in humanitarian settings.

When we look into 2019 Global Refugee Forum, we see a similar picture. Despite commitments to ensuring that age, gender and diversity approach is fully integrated as a cross-cutting issue, an analysis of the pledges made for the AGD stocktacking event[[2]](#footnote-2) earlier in the year reveals that a staggering 70% of the pledges didn’t mention age, gender and diversity in any form.

Yet, where challenges exist, opportunities to flourish and progress might be unlocked if there is a political will to take action. We must urgently ensure that all refugees and people in crisis-affected communities, particularly women and girls, can equitably access COVID-19 vaccinations through inclusion in national vaccination plans and through the tackling of informal barriers to access. However, beyond this, 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 age, gender and diversity 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 girl's 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 inclusion and engagement of all persons of concern to UNHCR in decision-making that affects their lives need further investments, to be more regular and systematic.
* Ensure a strong commitment by senior leadership to mainstream AGD in the oversight of refugee operations.
* Enhance the collection and analysis by UNHCR of data disaggregated by age and sex and by other diversity considerations, as contextually appropriate and possible.
* 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 LGBTQI+.
* 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 People.**

*\* to be updated once the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement report is published*

Furthermore, we are witnessing a key moment for internally displaced people, as the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement releases its final report to the UN Secretary-General. We would like to congratulate the High-Level Panel and its Secretariat for the inclusive process and for its recommendations, which we believe has the potential, if implemented, to become a game-changer for internally displaced people (IDPs). Hence, we would like to reiterate that the international community has a responsibility to ensure we can advance the protection and solution for internally displaced people.

In this regard, UNHCR has an important role to play as the agency mandated to coordinate the protection of people fleeing from violence, in pushing for the implementation of the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement’s recommendations. In particular, UNHCR should continue to play a leadership role by stepping up its advocacy to ensure enhanced political will at the global, regional and local context for IDPs protection and solution.

We as the NGO community stand ready to support these efforts and stand in full support of the recommendations of the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement.

Thank you chair.

1. CARE International, [Time for a better bargain: How the aid system shortchanges women and girls in crisis](https://www.care.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/She-Leads-in-Crisis-Report_4.7.21_updated.pdf), 28 February 2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. For more information, the Summary Report of the event is available [here](https://www.unhcr.org/en-ie/611fb5507.pdf). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)