

NGO Statement on Global Refugee Forum Preparations

This statement is delivered on behalf of a wide range of NGOs that have been consulted on how the *upcoming Global Refugee Forum (GRF)* can achieve its intended strategic outcome of addressing the current displacement crisis globally, and the root causes that push more and more people to flee their homes in search of safety and protection elsewhere. The world faces an increasing number of humanitarian and climate induced crises globally, both new and protracted. As the number of forcibly displaced individuals around the world continues to increase, there has never been a more important moment for a recommitment to responsibility sharing. Over the past few years, we have seen available refugee resettlement slots decrease, the asylum space shrink, commitment to responsibility sharing wane, a disregard for the principle of non-refoulement, and the core values and principles outlined in the Global Compact on Refugees eroded by restrictive migratory policies.

It is imperative that high-level leaders and other stakeholders come together at the GRF in solidarity and support of refugees, stateless people, and other displaced populations. With proper planning and execution, and a strong engagement process, the GRF can rebuild confidence among stakeholders of the Global Compact for Refugees (GCR) and forge a path forward to strengthen the buy-in of governments to honor and implement past commitments and create new ones. The GRF's structure and modalities will shape eventual outcomes of the event by influencing how civil society and other stakeholder groups can participate and engage in dialogue. To achieve positive results, the second GRF must go further to ensure inclusion of various stakeholders, especially forcibly displaced people who have a unique and important voice. The experience of forced displacement affects people in different ways, and the participation of refugees, stateless people, and other displaced populations is necessary.

Markers of a Successful Global Refugee Forum

The success of this Global Refugee Forum will ultimately be determined over the next four years. The Global Compact's voluntary nature makes accountability measures integral to its credibility and successful implementation. Governments should reflect the spirit of the Global Compact on Refugees in their national policies towards forcibly displaced people. They should end pushbacks at land and sea borders, end cooperative agreements that externalize refugee policy and put displaced people at risk, and should abide by the principles of non-refoulement. Governments should also ensure host governments and humanitarian agencies have the necessary resources, including funding, to adequately support the displaced populations they have welcomed.

Pledging governments must be held accountable for upholding their commitments. This entails capturing detailed information that clearly defines each pledge's objectives and measuring and evaluating its implementation. Pledging entities should commit to reporting in detail how their pledges are impacting refugees' lives—prioritizing the voices of those impacted as a key marker of success. Appropriate tracking tools should be provided by UNHCR to document progress.

Another measure of success for NGOs will be whether the 2023 GRF creates greater awareness and understanding of the issues facing displaced populations and results in tangible improvements in their lives and wellbeing. Governments, including those from host countries, humanitarian agencies, and all other relevant actors should make targeted, measurable funding, programmatic, and policy support commitments to address the challenges faced by refugees and host communities. This necessitates not only increased funding and programming, but also policy reforms that increase the protection and socio-economic inclusion

of forcibly displaced people – such as access to regularization and documentation, legal aid and empowerment, formal and decent employment opportunities, education at all levels, housing, healthcare, and freedom of movement, among others.

Next, NGOs also highlight the need to engage local civil society organizations (CSOs), particularly in contexts where restrictions prevent refugees from organizing. Refugee-led organizations and local civil society organizations are present on the ground and have the most accurate and detailed understanding of a crisis's context, challenges and opportunities. Meaningful in-country and regional consultations must be held, prioritizing the engagement of refugees, refugee-led organizations and civil-society organizations with refugee leadership, and other displaced people. Outcomes from these consultations must be used to directly shape the agenda for the GRF in December 2023. NGOs welcome the regional consultations that have been announced by UNHCR, ICVA and other NGO networks in some regions and urge similar consultations at the national level to better enable the participation of those most impacted. The findings of the consultations should be made public as soon as they are drafted, along with official outcome documents from the consultations.

Another key marker of success of the GRF will be the level of direct, meaningful, and sustained participation by refugees and other displaced populations, and contributors to the GRF to define clear targets for the inclusion of refugees in events prior to the GRF and the GRF itself including, for example, participation in official delegations and by defining refugee participation as a key theme of the GRF. The inaugural GRF, sufficient refugee participation will require official, accessible and digestible information about the GRF (including invitations) and meaningful support with visa applications for refugee participants. Women and girls make up roughly half of the world's forcibly displaced, while children make up 41%. Their participation, as well as the participation of refugees with disabilities, is essential to fully recognizing and addressing their needs.

In line with the goals on meaningful refugee participation, the GRF programme should prioritize events which allow for the development of partnerships and collaboration between refugees and other stakeholders, including governments, NGOs, and the private sector. In addition, the programme should provide opportunities for refugees to share their experiences, best practices, and perspectives, and to participate in discussions focused on developing innovative solutions to the challenges they face. To achieve this, event organizers should seek to include refugees in panel discussions, and to include the discussion of meaningful refugee participation and the ways to achieve it. Age, gender, diversity, and disability of refugee participants should be considered to ensure inclusive and accessible participation. The GRF programme should also allow more space for digital participation, to facilitate the inclusion of the most underrepresented groups and those who cannot travel. Videoconferencing or livestreaming should be made available in as many events as possible with interpretation available, so that these groups, including many refugees themselves, can follow the proceedings.

NGOs applaud the efforts made thus far to ensure that refugees, stateless people, and other displaced populations have clear opportunities to participate in the planning and implementation of the GRF. [The Advisory Board](#) composed of refugees, forcibly displaced individuals and stateless persons is a good first step to ensure that forcibly displaced individuals, including refugee youth, are part of all stages of the GRF process.

Success should be measured both by the level of participation of refugees in the GRF and its preparatory processes, as well as by the level of commitment and investment made by all stakeholders at the GRF to empower refugees and ensure their full inclusion and integration in society. The GRF must incentivize participants to include refugees, refugee-led organizations (RLOs), and displaced persons in their pledges. Concerted and sustained effort is needed from UNHCR and government stakeholders to meet this and other goals of the GRF.