

### **NGO Statement on Global Refugee Forum Preparations**

Thank you chair,

As we enter a critical stage of the preparations for the Global Refugee Forum (GRF), we would like to commend UNHCR for its efforts in ensuring that the GRF can deliver impactful and high-quality pledges. We see the Global Refugee Forum as a unique and urgent opportunity to ensure a collective commitment to improve our responses to the needs of forcibly displaced populations and enhance their protection and access to rights. Beyond pledges, success lies in our capacity to harness collaborative and inclusive commitments to address the increasingly complex and fast-changing nature of displacement to ultimately achieve durable solutions.

For this purpose, ensuring a multistakeholder approach must be at the heart of the efforts toward the GRF in December. As NGOs, we would like to provide some recommendations to enable a collective and holistic approach, recognising all thematic areas as critical to developing quality pledges and showcasing good practices.

First, UNHCR should strengthen coordination and communication on opportunities with all members of the global initiatives, with clear deadlines and standardized procedures to engage NGO partners. Among the aspects which deserve stronger attention, is the need for enhanced clarity regarding side events for the GRF - a key moment for announcing pledges and showcasing promising practices in the spirit of collective engagement. NGOs are keen to contribute to the side events but many of us who are part of GCR initiatives are struggling to understand the process and opportunities to be involved in the development of proposals. Without coordination, our capacity to support local partners in engaging in this process is reduced, impacting efforts to provide clear opportunities for direct refugee participation.

Second, we recognize that the process of pledge matching is an essential tool to secure the complementarity of pledges. However, we understand that currently, the pledge-matching process mostly involves States or host-country policy commitments to match support from donors and partners. While we understand the limitation and prioritization around these, we would be keen to understand how NGOs can be best involved in the process of matching NGO-led commitments to complementary multistakeholder pledges, as well as to financial, technical and any other forms of support.

Third, we would like to emphasize the importance of national and regional ownership of the process for pledge development. In this regard, we would like to call upon UNHCR and governments leading the pledge development process to open space for the meaningful participation of NGOs and refugee-led organizations as an integral part of the development of national pledges in the spirit of collective action and accountability. It's also critical that more clarity is provided as to how national and regional-level pledges can intersect with global multistakeholder pledges.

Fourth, we believe that age, gender and other forms of diversity including disability considerations are yet to gain the fundamental status it deserves. We call on pledging entities developing multi-stakeholders pledges to leverage their pledges as examples of how we can make inclusive commitments to tackle age, gender, and other forms of diversity including disability. We cannot afford

to leave marginalized groups, some representing a high percentage of the world's displaced population, excluded once more from commitments that could have the potential to change their lives and deliver on the commitments of the GCR.

Furthermore, we would like to congratulate UNHCR for its efforts to ensure that refugees themselves are represented in every step of the process. In this regard, we recognize the significant steps made since the last GRF, in ensuring the meaningful participation of refugees and refugee-led organizations from planning to actual participation in the conference. In particular, we would like to commend the creation of a refugee advisory council and the decision to include the participation of a refugee delegation.

However, we remain concerned with the measures to ensure participation in the representation of specific groups of refugees. Children are not only one of the biggest demographics but are also agents of change in their communities and eager to contribute to global policy discussions. Yet, we are concerned that children's participation in the GRF is not sufficiently prioritized. We worry that due to safeguarding, logistical and operational issues, many might be excluded from having a say in decision-making spaces and even in participating at the GRF itself. We would like to call on colleagues in the room to support their meaningful participation during the GRF and beyond, including through the use of virtual tools, the creation of child-friendly spaces and inviting children as speakers in the different panels.

Similarly, we know that for the majority of refugees and stateless persons, being physically present at the GRF will not be possible. We would like to recommend that UNHCR strongly consider flexible forms of participation to allow for children, persons with disabilities, older persons, and other groups of refugees across the world to engage in the event. This would dramatically reduce the burden of safeguarding and bureaucratic impediments for more diverse and inclusive expression and participation and reduce the environmental impact of the event. This includes providing real opportunities to engage, ask questions, and express their perspective through virtual and remote tools with interpreting support.

Furthermore, we recognize the importance of accessibility and inclusivity of the event to ensure equal and meaningful participation of refugees with disabilities and their supporting organizations. This includes physical accessibility of the venue, provision of captioning, sign language interpretation and accessibility of web and social media and adequate opportunities for refugees with disabilities and supporting organizations of persons with disabilities to share their perspectives.

To conclude, we would like to reiterate the points we made in the last preparatory meeting on the importance of accountability to the success of the GRF. Only collectively, with a wide range of perspectives recognized, we will be able to fully achieve the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees.

Thank you.