

First Formal Preparatory Meeting for the Global Refugee Forum
2 February 2023

NGO statement for the First Formal Preparatory Meeting for the Global Refugee Forum

Dear Chair,

NGOs commend UNHCR for the early start on preparations for the next GRF and the general roadmap already issued.

NGOs also thank UNHCR for the preliminary considerations for the GRF programme, a good basis for discussion requiring further details. In our view, deepening the focus on protection and durable solutions including in protracted crises will be important. Notably, by ensuring that a focus on children is at the heart of the GRF in all its sessions and the pledging process is developed through a child, age, gender, and diversity lens and a holistic approach.

We also take note of the desired outcomes for the GRF and especially the example of “the context of displacement related to climate change and disasters, pandemics and conflicts”, a focus of high interest to NGOs.

Importantly, the programme would need to include ongoing forced displacement and statelessness contexts, such as for the Rohingya and Syrian refugees. Once again, NGOs reiterate the importance of systematic, direct, and meaningful participation of forcibly displaced and stateless populations including children and organizations.

On the GRF event modalities, NGOs note with interest the various envisaged options for participation and engagement, including on “advocacy”, “amplify key messages”, demonstrating the values of partnerships and give “visibility to stakeholder groups”, and organizing side events. However, defining and communicating clearly, in advance the modalities for its organization will be fundamental to ensure a fair and balanced representation of and contributions from all stakeholders.

We particularly observed the specific role and prerogatives afforded to the GCR initiatives, and NGOs welcome further detailing and explaining. Additionally, the roadmaps suggested by NGOs coordinating through the initiatives would need to be encouraged and promoted in advance and during the GRF.

Regarding the plenary sessions, we would welcome some thinking designed to ensure that civil society contributions do not suffer from a strict application of the protocol. Being mindful of the practical complexities of such organization, we nonetheless worry about plenary sessions and other events in parallel and separate locations. Further details are welcomed to avoid having two categories of participants.

Finally, we strongly suggest that developing the programme should also be directly connected to the pledging process and to concrete efforts to take stock of progress and learn lessons over this year. Working to better translate the GRF preparation process at national and regional levels will be paramount. NGOs worry that the approach remains overly global and only accessible to stakeholders in Geneva. There are important existing opportunities that should be complemented, and NGOs call on UNHCR to fully exercise its catalytic role in this space.

Thank you.