

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

This statement is delivered on behalf of a wide range of NGOs. It has been prepared in close consultation with the NGO community, representing a diverse set of views.

With the second Global Refugee Forum (GRF), 2023 will mark four years since the affirmation of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR). Yet, the commitment embedded in the GCR towards more predictable and equitable responsibility-sharing is still pressing from Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, Syria, Ukraine to Venezuela and many other ongoing emergencies as well as protracted crises.

To realize responsibility-sharing, we need increased commitments of Member States on enabling policies and laws for durable solutions; multi-stakeholder and partnerships approaches including with development actors; dedicated flexible, predictable, multi-year and unearmarked funding; increased support to host States to further support the inclusion of forcibly displaced and stateless persons in access to social services, social protection schemes and development plans. Real responsibility-sharing cannot take place without safeguarding access to asylum, the rescue of people on the move, *non-refoulement* and other forms of international protection.

On durable solutions specifically, while investing in efforts to support refugees in host countries, including through social, economic, cultural and all other aspects of integration, is highly commendable, such solutions are not feasible in all contexts.

Many countries hosting millions of forcibly displaced populations, of which almost half are children, are facing their own economic challenges and may not be able to fully integrate refugees into their societies. For instance, an estimated 1.5 million Syrian refugees in Lebanon are even further impacted by this country's economic crisis preventing full integration, and achieving durable solutions. Simultaneously, there is no conditions for voluntary, dignified, and safe repatriation into Syria for most refugees, whilst lack of birth registration and statelessness further hinders their ability to fully integrate into Lebanese society and access basic rights and services. While we welcome [The Roadmap 2030](#) update to the original Three-Year Strategy on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways, much remains to be done to codify the principle of additionality in our programmes. In countless ways, we are shifting quotas, funding, and human resources capacity from resettlement to other pathways, often allowing new pathways to compete with, rather than complement resettlement.

In many countries there is also the political will to operationalize complementary pathways. Robust do no harm analysis and risk mitigation should be in place now that the complementary pathways are not yet a fully established approach to resettlement in many countries. It is time to accelerate the discussion and pledges regarding resettlement and complementary pathways to third countries.

### **The preparations for the second Global Refugee Forum**

NGOs commend UNHCR for the early start on preparations for the next GRF and the general roadmap already issued last year. Experience from 2019 indicates that it is important to devote the right amount of time to this process in order to get it right.

### **Development of the programme**

NGOs thank UNHCR for [the Preliminary key considerations for the development of the programme](#) for the GRF, which represent a good basis for discussion and will require further detailing and

additions. This year, to identify central and collective commonalities towards the Compact's objectives, it will be important to deepen the focus on protection and durable solutions including in protracted crises. In particular:

Half of the world's forcibly displaced population are children. It will be crucial to ensure that a focus on **children** is at the heart of the GRF and the pledging process. The GRF programme should ensure a focus on children in all its sessions and that pledges are developed through a child, age, gender, and diversity lens. Learning from the last GRF and looking at the future it is key to ensure that a holistic approach is adopted where all children's needs, including child protection, child-sensitive durable solutions, access to education and other services, and child participation are included.

We take note on the desired outcomes for the GRF and especially noting the mention of "**the context of displacement related to climate change and disasters, pandemics and conflicts**" in relation to responsibility-sharing arrangements. As long as it does not divert attention from forced displacement due to conflicts, this focus is of high concern and interest to NGOs given the drivers and impacts of forced displacement in the context of climate change and disasters. For instance, to name only a few, in terms of water scarcity, deterioration of quality of water; food security; health; and the risks of increasing intensification of conflicts.

It would be important that the GRF also include the **current forced displacement contexts** and that **protracted crises are not forgotten**, such as the Rohingya crisis.

On the **GRF event modalities**, NGOs note with interest the various envisaged options for **participation and engagement**, including opportunities for "advocacy" and to "amplify key messages", the emphasis on demonstrating the values of partnerships and give "visibility to stakeholder groups", the scope for organizing a variety of side vents.

We, however, point to the need for further clarifications about those various options and how they will actually materialize. Defining and communicating clearly in advance the modalities for the organization of those components of the GRF will be fundamental to ensure fair and balanced representation of all stakeholders and their contributions. We particularly note the specific role and prerogatives afforded to the GCR initiatives, and would welcome further detailing and explaining. For example, how will the initiatives suggestions be selected and by whom?

It will be crucial to ensure that the roadmaps suggested by NGOs coordinating through GCR initiatives are agreed and supported. Many children-focused organizations, working together through the Initiative for Child Rights in the Global Compacts and the Education Alliance, for example, are coordinating efforts and will propose events focused on children with specific attention to child protection, access to education and other services, child-sensitive durable solutions, and child participation. It is crucial that such a collaborative and coordinated approach is encouraged and promoted in the lead-up to and during the GRF.

With regard to the plenary sessions, we would welcome some thinking designed to ensure that civil society voices and contributions do not suffer from a strict application of the protocol. Our experience indicates that, speaking last according to protocol, NGOs often face obstacles in getting their voices heard. Being mindful of the practical complexities of organizing such an event, especially with the ongoing Palais renovations, we nonetheless worry about the plans to hold the plenary sessions and other events in parallel and separate locations. We would welcome further details as to plans to avoid this resulting in two categories of participants.

Finally, we strongly suggest that developing the programme should also be directly connected to the pledging process as well as to concrete efforts to take stock of progress and learn lessons over the course of this year. We provide further considerations to those topics below but highlight here that this will also mean working to better translate the GRF preparation process at national and regional levels. NGOs worry that the approach remains overly global and accessible to stakeholders with a presence in Geneva. Further efforts will be needed to identify GRF priorities at regional and national levels, take stock of progress and learn lessons in those contexts, all feeding into the development of the programme. The UNHCR-NGO Regional Consultations will constitute important opportunities in this regard. Another opportunity could be through the GRF roadmap of each initiative that could include details on improvement of communication and coordination between global and country efforts. Those opportunities should be complemented by other initiatives and NGOs' call on UNHCR to fully exercise its catalytic role in this space.

### **Engagement and participation modalities**

In recent months, UNHCR has put in place a range of diverse opportunities for stakeholders to engage – which remain open. We commend UNHCR on actions taken to increase opportunities for NGOs, organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons and other stakeholders. Reiterating points made in our [collective statement](#) at the December 2021 High-Level Officials Meeting, NGOs would like to emphasize the importance of systematic, direct, and meaningful participation of diverse groups of forcibly displaced and stateless populations and organizations including children in the lead-up to the second GRF, during the GRF itself and beyond.

In 2023, the three formal preparatory meetings and the quarterly informal briefings will be important opportunities to consult and update all stakeholders on the GRF preparations. To be meaningful, it will be necessary that those briefings ensure a clear overview of how NGOs, affected persons, organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons can contribute to the GRF and be involved in its preparations. It will be important to highlight a balance between progress made, gaps observed, main priorities needed, and ensure those meetings are not only focused on the global level but also talk to regional and country levels. Given that most of the pledges already made focus on the areas of Statelessness, Solutions, Protection Capacity and Education, it will be fundamental to have related dedicated items and guarantee these are properly mainstreamed across all preparatory discussions and as part of the GRF agenda itself. This could also be supplemented with dedicated thematic stocktaking sessions as was successfully done in the run-up to the 2021 High-Level Officials Meeting, to monitor and encourage pledges implementation.

### **Pledges and initiatives**

We commend UNHCR for the launch of the dedicated [pledges matching portal](#), a key step recommended by NGOs.

The two types of pledges matching, retroactive and for future pledges, is also positive. The possibility to see the retroactive pledges with an interactive map of 200+ pledges made by hosting countries is welcomed and doing the same with future pledges would be useful. Despite this important tool, we also know that bringing visibility and attention to these pledges in English will be insufficient to effectively match all needs. Accessing information in multiple languages, targeting specific meetings at national, regional, and global levels, pro-actively reaching stakeholders, applying a gender, age, and diversity lens, developing costed plans, building partnerships could constitute an essential yardstick to successfully match pledges.

Crucially, the pledging processes should not be centralized at global level: it is key that pledge-making happens at national and regional levels, with broad participation across stakeholders, including NGOs, affected populations, UN agencies, The World Bank Group, development partners,

and applying an age, gender, and diversity-sensitive approach. This process should be facilitated by UNHCR when possible and ensure coherence with global initiatives. For instance, improving coordination between country and global levels is one of the prioritized outcomes of the [Poverty Alleviation Coalition](#) Initiative, in its detailed roadmap.

In addition, NGOs welcomed [the key considerations](#) put in place by UNHCR to constitute high-quality and new pledges, including *inter alia* an age, gender, and diversity approach and centering on refugees, stateless persons and host communities' participation. All stakeholders should take into consideration of those two approaches to pledges. It is also key to ensure that all stakeholders develop and review all their pledges through a child-sensitive lens. NGOs recommend that the new GCR portal and system put in place should focus on facilitating the inclusion, implementation, and monitoring of child-sensitive approaches in current and future pledges. For this to happen pledges must focus on children holistically.

The current [fifty initiatives](#) open up increased avenues for exchanging and mobilizing around the GCR and the GRF, but will also require concerted efforts to ensure coherence and to feed into a GRF roadmap and the development of concrete pledges towards the end of the year. Efforts to include the diversity of organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless populations in pledge-matching and pledge development should be further articulated and resourced, so we ensure pledges reflect their needs. It will be equally important to coordinate with other mechanisms and initiatives where Member States have made relevant commitments. For instance, the "UPR third Cycle evaluation and Lessons for the Future" upcoming report<sup>1</sup> is an assessment of how statelessness and the right to nationality in the Universal Periodic Review has been mainstreamed thus far.

To date, we are encouraged by NGOs' involvement in several initiatives. For instance, the emerging [Global Alliance to End Statelessness](#), a multi-stakeholder initiative that will include Member States, UN bodies, NGOs, and stateless-led organizations, provides a unique opportunity to both encourage further State pledges, together with creating an ongoing platform to support implementation through the practical international and regional level initiatives planned until 2030.

NGOs are also leading participants in the **Global Family Reunification Network and its Advisory Group**, the **Global Task Force on Labour Mobility**, and the **Global Task Force on Education**, and we look forward to working with partners in these groups to advance pledges related to third country solutions, including and especially resettlement.

[The Initiative for Child Rights in the Global Compacts](#), in close collaboration and coordination with **the Group of Friends on Age, Gender, and Diversity**, is fully committed to working with UNHCR and other stakeholders in the lead-up to and during the GRF to ensure that children are at the heart of the GCR implementation and that displacement-affected children are included into national systems. The initiative is ready to work with other stakeholders to:

Develop joint pledges to achieve a step change in providing appropriate child protection services to children in refugee situations and on investing in inclusion and durable solutions for children in displacement situations.

Deliver and further increase commitments towards appropriate quality education.

Establish processes and develop joint pledges for the meaningful participation of children.

The [Poverty Alleviation Coalition](#), launched in July 2019, is a growing coalition consisting of UNHCR, The World Bank Partnership for Economic Inclusion and 15 NGOs that has pledged to increase self-

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<sup>1</sup> Forthcoming publication, end of February 2023.

reliance, economic and social inclusion of extremely poor refugees and host community members using the well-proven graduation approach from 2020-2025.

However, other initiatives such as the Support Platforms and the Asylum Capacity Support Group still lack meaningful NGO engagement. For a whole-of-society and multi-stakeholder engagement and support to forcibly displaced populations and host communities, such initiatives will require better inclusivity, greater communication, and identification for collaboration and mutual support.

### **Tracking progress**

Going forward to achieve more effective responsibility-sharing, it will be paramount to evaluate the progress made through the GCR objectives and arrangements and whether the overall [1685<sup>2</sup> pledges](#) already made respond to the needs of forcibly displaced populations. Most of those pledges focus on the areas of Statelessness, Solutions, Protection Capacity and Education. Therefore, the analysis and report of progress towards the implementation of those pledges will be key.

As for data, it is the basis for implementing the GCR in a way that is age, gender, and diversity sensitive. Yet, disaggregated data is still scarce or not consistently collected. To ensure the right support reaches all forcibly displaced populations, it is crucial to systematically improve data collection and ensure the [GCR indicator report](#) focuses on issues that affect refugees and stateless persons the most, including children who represent almost half of the forcibly displaced population. The report should particularly focus on child protection services and best interests' procedures; quality education; healthcare, including psychosocial support and sexual and reproductive healthcare; legal representation; child-friendly asylum procedures; and documentation.

To conclude, the announcement of the co-conveners – Colombia, Japan, Jordan, France, Niger, Uganda – and the co-hosts – Switzerland and UNHCR – for the second GRF represents an opportunity to accelerate momentum to advance the Compact's objectives through diplomacy and additional political contributions at all levels, attract additional humanitarian and development funding and resources including through new mechanisms and instruments, mobilize high-quality pledges, and share good practices.

NGOs also urge all Member States and other stakeholders to accelerate efforts to implement the principles embedded in the Global Compact on Refugees and further mobilize international cooperation and solidarity in the lead-up to the second Global Refugee Forum.

Thank you.

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<sup>2</sup> As indicated on the GCR Dashboard in February 2023.