

## NGO Statement on enhancing responsibility-sharing

Esteemed organizers, co-conveners, participants,

This statement was prepared in close consultation with a wide range of NGOs and reflects their diverse views.

A lot has happened since the first Global Refugee Forum (GRF) in 2019. But little did we know what was to come. The momentum of the first-ever forum was soon followed by the sweeping COVID-19 pandemic which had disproportionate socio-economic and protection impacts on displacement-affected populations. The emergence of new humanitarian crises coupled with existing crises that have become more protracted, are further compounded by the growing impact of climate change and natural hazards.

All the while, the global displacement situation has only become bleaker with more than 108 million people displaced globally, including 43 million children. More than 35 million people are now refugees, of whom 80% are hosted in countries that collectively account for only 19% of the world's income.

The need for accelerating the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees is thus more acute than ever. Particular focus should be placed on the advancement of more equitable responsibility-sharing, which entails delivering on and expanding resettlement commitments, providing alternative pathways, and ensuring access to asylum. It also entails providing better and more sustained support – both financial and technical - to hosting countries to enable them to further establish and strengthen their social and economic infrastructure in support of enhanced inclusion. Despite good intentions and multiple pledges towards this end, the support provided to hosting countries is nowhere near sufficient, and we urge all stakeholders, States in particular, to do better.

The same applies to statelessness - regardless of considerable efforts by States and others to end statelessness, millions continue to be denied access to a nationality, and are left undocumented and invisible, prevented from accessing a range of other basic rights.

We highlight three overarching priorities:

Firstly, **achieving progress through holistic implementation of the four objectives of the GCR**. We are standing at a junction, where the realization of durable solutions is shrinking and discussions around refugee protection are becoming increasingly challenging. But the Compact provides a roadmap for improving the situation. And since its adoption, despite the challenging outlook, we have seen some positive developments which stress its continued relevance.

The EU showed unprecedented agility and flexibility in welcoming Ukrainian refugees seeking safety in Europe, facilitating their access to protection, education, the labour market and more with the adoption of the Temporary Directive; experiences that can and should inform a more effective and humane approach to refugee reception at large. Many refugee-hosting countries have also continued to implement promising policies and practices to support refugees alongside host communities. Jordan's 2020 amendment to its work permit policy expanding the sectors in which registered Syrian refugees can work is an important such step. Kenya's new Refugee Act allowing for better inclusion of and mobility for refugees is another promising development. Yet, these countries are not receiving the required – and promised – support, which risks eroding the principle of global solidarity underpinning the Compact.

To achieve the commitments embedded in the GCR, it is imperative to balance the weight of investments in its different objectives to ensure a holistic implementation. Self-reliance is important - and one of the GCR objectives - but it is not a solution in itself, though it *can* be a pathway towards a solution. While

continued investment in self-reliance for both the forcibly displaced and their hosts remains a priority, we must not lose sight of durable solutions. We must continue to push forward concrete and complementary action on access to justice, resettlement, humanitarian admission, support to asylum capacity in third States, maintaining access to territory and asylum - and paving the ground for informed, dignified, and sustainable returns. We must simultaneously redouble efforts to address root causes of conflict and displacement, including statelessness.

In this regard, we welcome the inclusion of nexus and peacebuilding multi-stakeholder pledges at this GRF. These can provide avenues for further amplifying good practices from various country contexts, underline the importance of local bottom-up approaches and coordination, contribute to developing common standards and ultimately maximise our collective impact.

However, we are concerned about the increasing politicisation of humanitarian aid which undermines humanitarian principles, effective humanitarian action and our ability to reach the most vulnerable. We hope that this GRF can help amplify and reassert these basic principles.

This brings us to the second priority: **Advancing genuine and meaningful participation.** To design and implement a GRF process that works, it must be led by refugees and forcibly displaced people. When it comes to the meaningful participation of refugees, stateless persons, and Refugee-Led Organizations (RLOs) in the GRF and related processes, we have seen notable progress since 2019. We commend UNHCR for its efforts to ensure more systematic and meaningful participation of refugees and refugee-led networks and organizations in the GRF processes including through the creation of the UNHCR advisory board, the encouragement of Member States and other stakeholders to include refugees as part of their delegations, etc. We also commend forcibly displaced communities as well as representatives of RLOs who have rightfully demanded to be included from the outset. But despite these efforts, we still have some way to go when it comes to truly meaningful participation, and we would be keen to see more States in particular take up this mantle.

Looking forward, we need to build in more space for contributions from refugees and forcibly displaced people in all their diversity, without reducing the space for engagement of NGOs and broader civil society in GRF processes and the forum itself – including for women, children, and women-led organizations. Some of the processes for influencing this year's GRF, including the convening of side-events and the pledging modality, could have been made more inclusive and accessible. Many NGOs were also eager to host linked events, which could not be included within the remits of the programme. In addition, arrangements must be made earlier to enable more refugees to obtain visas to be able to travel to the GRF in due time.

NGOs – and civil society at large - have played an important role in developing and implementing pledges made at the GRF 2019, with a third of all pledges coming from civil society entities. NGOs have provided valuable inputs to the GRF architecture to make it more inclusive, as well as through research and evidence-generation to inform collective analysis on progress and gaps. While NGOs are also engaging in numerous multistakeholder pledges, we look forward to seeing the statistics of their engagement in this year's GRF pledges and in the forum to better understand if the current modalities and processes have adequately facilitated their participation.

The third priority that we would like to highlight relates to the pledging modality and related engagement: **Ensuring ownership and space for all, including local actors.**

The pledging modality introduced for this year's GRF centred around a limited number of multistakeholder pledges, is paving the way for increased coherence in pledging. It furthermore has the potential to ensure more sustained engagement of GRF stakeholders in the implementation of pledges, and to facilitate more tangible collaboration between the various stakeholders - from private to public sector.

We also welcome the attempt to introduce a pledge matching mechanism to ensure the needs of hosting States are met, and we believe the measures taken have the potential to increase accountability and enable us collectively to better assess progress, needs and gaps.

While we acknowledge the need for leadership and direction-setting, we nevertheless hope that it will be possible to establish a more decentralized decision-making structure around the various pledges looking forward to ensuring the continued engagement, buy-in and meaningful contributions of the full variety of GRF stakeholders.

As a broad and diverse NGO community, we are present in countries affected by conflict and displacement. Efforts must be made to bring the GCR, and the GRF, ‘to life’ at country level, in displacement contexts, over the course of the next four years, not only in terms of ensuring proactive development of and involvement in pledges at the country level but also at community level. While we talk about localization at a global level, we need to take more steps to ensure that the GRF and pledging processes are locally led.

We hope that commitments to local action – as set out in the [multistakeholder pledge on advancing localization in displacement and statelessness responses](#) – will encourage increased support to first responders and give local actors, including RLOs, an enhanced role in ensuring contextually relevant, efficient, effective, and sustainable solutions.

City-led action is an important vehicle towards this end, for example [the joint pledge from Nairobi and Kampala city authorities](#) to institutionalize access to city services and infrastructure for refugees, supported by the International Rescue Committee (IRC), its local partners Platform for Vendors from Kampala and Pamoja Trust in Nairobi, the Mayors Migration Council, and the IKEA Foundation.

Our hopes and expectations are first and foremost that the Global Refugee Forum 2023 will be a collective recommitment to overcome divisions and jointly address the challenges that people living in displacement are taking on every day– placing human rights as well as humanitarian needs and principles at the centre of our joint efforts.

More concretely, we hope that the forum will serve as a platform for the roll-out of tangible, multi-year pledges, with a committed and broad set of stakeholders which can become vehicles for real impact that refugees can point to, including through strengthened pathways towards durable solutions and increased collaboration between stakeholders.

Towards this end, as part of the proposed follow-up arrangements to this GRF, we propose to UNHCR to develop a review mechanism whereby end-users - affected populations themselves - will be involved in assessing tangible progress and outcomes from the GRF. We are ready to support the development of such a mechanism to ensure meaningful participation and accountability throughout the GRF cycle.

Achieving an impactful and holistic implementation of the GCR objectives not only requires a solid and inclusive review process in terms of pledge implementation, but also the calling out of inaction and obvious rejections of policies and practices that undermine efforts towards global responsibility sharing.

In four years, at the next GRF, we hope to see the fruits of sustained engagement of multiple actors in pledges which have delivered tangible protection and solutions outcomes for both displaced populations and the communities hosting them. And a renewed and continued commitment to global responsibility sharing and solidarity as the foundation for a functioning refugee system.

Thank you.