



# NGO statements at UNHCR Executive and Standing Committee Meetings

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## Background

This document is an updated and consolidated version of previous ICVA guidelines and drafting procedures for NGO statements and UNHCR committee meetings, as can be seen [here](#) and [here](#).

### UNHCR Executive Committee Meetings (ExCom)

The [Executive Committee](#) meets annually (usually in October) to review and approve UNHCRs programmes and financial requirements for the next calendar year, advise on international protection, and discuss a range of issues with UNHCR and intergovernmental and non-governmental partners. During the annual meeting, the ExCom reviews the work of the [Standing Committee](#) (SCom) conducted in that same calendar year.

### UNHCR Standing Committee Meetings (SCom)

The ExCom's Standing Committee meets three times a year (March, June/July, September) to continue the body's work between the plenary sessions. The Standing Committee examines thematic issues, reviews UNHCR activities and programmes in the different regions, adopts appropriate decisions and conclusions on issues, and discusses other issues of concern.

### ICVAs Role

ICVA has long worked to amplify collective NGO voices to influence policies and practices affecting forcibly displaced and stateless persons. Guided by a commitment to principled and effective humanitarian action, ICVA's forced displacement focus area seeks to ensure that responses to forced displacement are rooted in international human rights and refugee law.

In line with the above, and per its mandate, ICVA coordinates NGO statements (the drafting process, diverse representation and quality) presented at UNHCRs SCom and ExCom meetings, ensuring that the NGO collective perspective and message is shared and elevated. ICVA relies on its Members, NGO fora and other NGO partners to lead in the drafting of the statements, and provides capacity support to those agencies when required. NGOs do not have to be ICVA Members to contribute to the statement drafting.

The NGO statements align with the agenda items of the committee meetings, broadly as follows:

- March SCom: regional activities and global programmes, international protection and coordination – example agenda, [here](#).
- June/July SCom: international protection – example agenda, [here](#).
- September SCom: budget / financial requirements statement – example agenda, [here](#).
- October ExCom: general debate, international protection – example agenda, [here](#).

Collective statements may also be coordinated under other agenda items as relevant, such as on the topics of the Oral Update on the ExCom Conclusion and Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) related to the Global Refugee Forum (GRF) and High-Level Officials Meeting (HLOM).



## Purpose of NGO statements

NGO statements seek to raise issues of common concern about particular forcibly displaced and statelessness situations (in line with the agenda item) and urge action from UNHCR and States through targeted recommendations. The primary goal of a statement is to ensure that NGO thinking and views are heard and to push UNHCR and States to provide better protection, assistance and durable solutions. To the degree possible, the statements should provide a unique NGO/local/displacement led perspective.

## Forcibly displaced and stateless led organisation engagement

The messaging and recommendations from those who are or have been forcibly displaced and/or stateless should be central to discussions at the Executive and Standing Committee meetings. NGO statements seek to include this perspective.

Normally, ICVA is reaching out to organisations led by forcibly displaced or stateless persons if they are already ICVA members, or if they are in some way affiliated with ICVA members. ICVA will encourage and support agencies to co-draft statements, to share capacity, load and experience. ICVA can step in with additional capacity support and advise representatives from displaced and stateless led organisations as needed.

## Process

### Roles and responsibilities

The strength of the NGO statements relies on the collective efforts of agencies to contribute content, messaging and recommendations.

**Lead drafter(s):** pen holder for the statement and develops the zero draft, and leads on the priority messaging. Collects and incorporates inputs from other NGOs. Can deliver the statement at the committee meeting, if that is the lead drafters preference. NB: ICVA cannot financially support the travel of a lead drafter to Geneva *See section below for more details.*

**NGO community:** responsible for providing inputs, comments, and feedback on first and final drafts. Where the lead-drafter cannot deliver the statement, a non-drafting NGO will be approached to do so.

**ICVA:** guides and coordinates the process including sharing the drafts for inputs, provides support to lead drafter as needed, delivers where the lead drafter or non-drafting NGO cannot deliver the statement (e.g., where it might contain sensitive messaging that could place NGOs at risk, or for logistical or other reasons). ICVA provides a final quality control of the statements which includes ensuring correct usage of technical terms, fact checking, modifying the language and tone if needed, and editing length, for example.



## NGO Delegations and Participation

As per the [UNHCR Executive Committee Rules of Procedure](#), participation at the UNHCR Governance Bodies is limited to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) with **ECOSOC status** or NGOs who are an **ICVA Member**.

NGOs who have ECOSOC status, or NGOs that are members of ICVA, can include NGOs who have neither of those affiliations **to their delegation**. This will grant them access to the meeting. To fulfil ICVA's ongoing commitment to promote the meaningful engagement of organisations that are led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons, ICVA will include the representatives of these organisations to the ICVA delegation in cases where the representatives will deliver the collective NGO statement.

Participants flying into Geneva from abroad may require a visa and a visa recommendation letter. ICVA is available to advise its NGO members on the necessary requirements to attend meetings in Geneva and can provide visa recommendation letters. For representatives of organisations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons, ICVA can facilitate engagement with UNHCR for additional advice on visa requirements.

ICVA currently does not have the financial means to support the travel costs of visiting Members or NGOs.

## Timeline

### ***Before the committee meetings***

ICVA will engage with UNHCR, advocating for timely information about each Committee meeting, including RSVP, tentative agendas, details of side events and other documents. This will then be shared with NGOs through the ICVA Standing Committee Mailing list.

Below is a rough outline to guide a consultative drafting process – a longer timeline, where possible, should be considered:

- **8 weeks to meeting**
  - o ICVA sends out a call for interest to identify a lead drafter. Lead drafter should have expertise on content matter. ICVA can provide capacity support as required.
- **7 weeks to meeting**
  - o Lead drafter identified.
  - o Lead drafter has up to two weeks to write first draft.
- **5 weeks to meeting**
  - o Lead drafter shares first draft with ICVA for a first review and then distribution to NGOs.
  - o NGOs are invited to comment on the first draft and provide any additional information (up to 1.5 or 2 week turnaround).
- **4 weeks to meeting**
  - o Lead drafter works on consolidating the comments received to the first draft (one week turnaround)
- **3 weeks to meeting**



- Lead drafter shares second draft with ICVA for their review
- ICVA reviews, edits as needed, and shares the second draft to NGOs who are invited to flag red line comments only (1.5 or 2 week turnaround)
- **2 weeks to meeting**
  - Lead drafter finalises the document (one week turnaround), including a shorter 650 word oral version of the statement.
- **1 week to meeting**
  - Lead drafter shares two final versions of the document (longer and shorter) with ICVA for final quality control, copy editing and formatting. ICVA will make final red line edits at its discretion, based on experience engaging in the Committee meetings.
  - ICVA shares the two final versions of the statement with NGO lead drafters ahead of the meeting, one for oral delivery and the written version.

### ***During the committee meetings***

NGOs attending the SCom/ExCom meetings will be briefed by ICVA on the relevant protocols to deliver the statement.

ICVA to share each oral statement with UNHCR HQ at least one hour before the agenda item begins.

ICVA will monitor the dynamics in the room and the content of State statements being issued. ICVA can make final edits to the NGO statements, on the day, if required and based on the live discussions in the room (i.e., where sympathy is being expressed by delegates to a specific emergency, etc.).

ICVA will post the NGO statements on the ICVA website and social media and share links with members.

### ***After the committee meetings***

As mentioned in the 'purpose' section above, the NGO statements are an opportunity to call Member States and UNHCR to action through targeted recommendations, and to raise the profile on a certain issue.

Following the delivery of the NGO statement, and where relevant, ICVA can support NGOs in the follow up of the specific recommendations. ICVA can facilitate further dialogue or consultation between stakeholders, so that the recommendations outlined have some follow through.

NGO statements will also be posted onto ICVA's website with open access.

## **Guidelines for lead drafter(s)**

Effective statements are ones in which the issue is clearly stated, the voices of those affected are central (in the messaging and delivery), and the recommendations are specific and targeted.



Lead drafters should have expertise on the content matter, and a readiness to engage with NGO members to request their inputs. The level of effort required is outlined in the 'timeline' step, above and ICVA can provide capacity support as required.

Advantages of being a lead drafter are linked with the ability to include messaging, including those most pressing to the lead drafter agency, programming and people. From previous experience, the lead drafter on a certain topic might then be a focal point for specific follow up and engagement from States and UNHCR.

ICVA encourages a 'pairing' system with two lead drafters; an INGO and a local/displacement/stateless-led organisation.

## Target audience

The statement should be directed towards Member States and UNHCR.

**Member States** decide on the mandate and capability of UNHCR, and so are a key target audience. The Executive Committee currently consists of 110 member states, and an additional 14 Standing Committee observer States. The list can be found, [here](#), including the Chair Person, Vice Chair people, Rapporteur and Secretary.

In 2024, the [five largest donors to UNHCR](#) were the US, European Union, Sweden, Germany, France. The start of 2025 has witnessed a seismic shift in funding due to the decisions of the Government of the United States, which will likely have significant impact for UNHCR, its partners and programmes.

Statements can also be directed towards **UNHCR** directly, to push for improvements in the protection response and solutions for forcibly displaced people. NGOs have the advantage of engaging with UNHCR at various levels (HQ, regional and country) and can therefore ensure that UNHCR messaging is strong and consistent, and in line with NGO advocacy.

## Format

**Content:** The statements should identify problem areas for increased attention. They should be built upon a strong evidence base (with citations applied), local and field perspectives, and clearly articulated and targeted recommendations. Statements should avoid overly describing the general context of the country or situation if the information is readily available otherwise. Context, including statistics, can be included as footnotes. These can be useful for NGO advocacy beyond the Committee meetings.

**Collaboration:** The statement should raise issues that are common across agencies (not just that of the lead drafter) and therefore should solicit inputs from other agencies in the drafting process.

**Length:** Lead drafters should work on a written statement which is inclusive of NGO inputs, with no fixed word count but aiming for about two pages. However, during the Committee meetings, NGOs have a five-minute speaking slot which translates to **around 600-650 words**. A short version of the longer statement is therefore required. For archival purposes, ICVA will post two versions on its website, an oral version and a written version.



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**Language:** English (UK) is the language used for most NGO statements. French or Spanish are also possible, but generally only practical in discussions on regional situations.

**Delivering the statement:** generally, the lead drafter will be responsible for the oral presentation of the statement. Where there has been the involvement of a refugee or displacement led organisation, their representative should be prioritised.