

**Oral update on ExCom Conclusions (2025 theme: Climate action as relevant to the
activities of UNHCR)
NGO Collective Statement – Written Statement**

This statement was drafted in consultation with a wide range of NGOs.

As climate change continues to increase risks facing vulnerable communities, it is vital to acknowledge the exposure and unique situations of vulnerability of forcibly displaced populations, including refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). UNHCR's Climate Action Strategic Plan is therefore a welcome and critical framework for ensuring that forcibly displaced and stateless persons, and communities who host them, have access to services, resources, and planning processes to strengthen resilience. This includes: (1) participation and leadership by displaced communities in community-based disaster risk reduction and anticipatory action; and (2) adapting livelihoods to current and projected future climate conditions; both of which require mainstreaming resilience and sustainability across program design.

1. Participation and leadership in community-based disaster risk reduction and anticipatory action

Displaced individuals, whether residing in camps, urban areas, or host communities, are especially vulnerable to environmental risks like floods, droughts, and extreme weather events, which hinder their ability to recover and rebuild. These challenges are being compounded due to the impacts of climate change – an immediate threat in climate vulnerable locations where many refugee communities live.

The Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) underscores the significance of involving those directly affected in response efforts, reinforcing the critical role of Refugee-Led Organizations (RLOs) in the localization of solutions. By collaborating with displaced communities, UNHCR can support the design of climate adaptation strategies that are more responsive to specific needs of these communities, empowering them to actively engage in solutions. Furthermore, ensuring the inclusion of displaced youth, particularly young women and marginalised groups, in decision-making processes is essential to promote long-term, community-driven resilience.

Representation and access to information for displaced people is particularly critical as refugees find themselves in a new environment where they may not speak the language and are unfamiliar with local administrative processes. As a result, they require support to navigate this context and exercise their rights. Given their often-heightened vulnerability due to their experiences of displacement and possible trauma, it is crucial that they receive guidance from legal advisors who can provide orientation and help them understand their rights, as well as when and how to assert them, all of which will ensure their engagement and leadership in climate action.

2. Adapting livelihoods

Support for adapting livelihoods to current and projected future climate conditions, in both urban and rural settings, is key to ensuring resiliency and increased self-reliance of forcibly displaced communities. This means ensuring financial resources and technical support to acquire skills in areas such as sustainable farming and climate-smart practices, including vertical farming, hydroponics, and aquaponics. These methods can increase productivity and offer fresh produce to local markets. This approach not only improves food security but also builds resilience in rural and urban settings, benefiting refugees, stateless individuals, and host communities alike.

In Uganda, for example, urban farming is becoming a solution to food insecurity, income generation, and environmental challenges in expanding cities. It involves growing crops and raising livestock in small spaces like backyards, rooftops, and vacant lots. Refugees in urban settings and beyond (like in Uganda) can contribute significantly to food security and economic growth by using their agricultural skills to support themselves and their families, providing a stable income and reducing dependency on aid. To ensure inclusion of displaced individuals with disabilities, who face additional challenges such as limited access to resources, inaccessible tools, physical barriers, and social stigma, targeted support, including adaptive training, accessible tools, and equal opportunities, must also be provided. Additionally, access to green jobs, including renewable energy and waste management, should be expanded for forcibly displaced individuals.

Resilience must also be built into planned relocation responses, through which people voluntarily move away from extreme hazards. In the Republic of Georgia, for example, ecomigration has offered this pathway for families displaced by landslides and other disasters in high mountain areas, or for whom climate change is increasing the likelihood of recurrent disasters. As people rebuild their lives and livelihoods through ecomigration, they must adapt to new agricultural conditions, including shifts in seasonal patterns such as reduced water availability during historic planting periods, or unusually heavy rainfall at times of harvest. Greater access to information on climate risks, alongside agricultural extension services and post-harvest production support, are critical and increase the resilience of families who have moved through planned relocation.

Mainstreaming resilience and sustainability

To preserve and rehabilitate ecological systems as well as ensure use of natural resources for livelihoods, resilience and sustainability must be mainstreamed across activity design. A notable example is the work undertaken in the Lake Chad Basin region, which includes Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria. In this area, UNHCR has partnered with host governments and local communities to enhance natural resource management. The focus has been on promoting sustainable agricultural practices, water management, and the preservation of fragile ecosystems. This approach includes training both refugees and host communities in climate-smart agriculture and effective natural resource management to combat environmental degradation and ensure mutual benefits.

In closing, we call on UNHCR and member states to:

- Safeguard access to essential services, including healthcare, water, sanitation, and energy, to enhance resilience and reduce climate-related risks for forcibly displaced populations;
- Invest in education and capacity-building programs for displaced youth, equipping them with skills in climate adaptation, sustainable livelihoods, and environmental stewardship; and
- Ensure access to information and legal representation for people displaced in the context of climate change.

As highlighted in UNHCR's Strategic Framework for Climate Action, "strengthening resilience and preparedness measures is critical to protection-centred action."