

**93rd Meeting of the Standing Committee, Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme
17-19 June 2025**

NGO Oral Statement on International Protection

Dear Chair, Distinguished Delegates,

This statement was consulted with a range of NGOs.

We meet today as the international system faces an existential threat. The number of people killed in conflict in 2024 marked a 30% increase from 2023; the number of displaced people worldwide is 70% more than at the end of 2018. Yet the reduction in foreign aid expenditure by major donors announced since 2024 is unprecedented.

123.2 million are currently forcibly displaced. These are real people: individuals, families, and communities, many of whom do not know where they will get their next meal; who are unable to shelter their children; who will likely die if they require life-saving medical care. The scale of this crisis is staggering. If the number of displaced people globally formed a country, it would be the twelfth biggest country on earth.

We are concerned too, about the failure to uphold core refugee protection principles, which is not only a matter of resources—it is also about political will. We are witnessing an erosion of the right to seek asylum across multiple regions. Border externalisation, detention regimes, and increases in cases of refoulement. These measures reflect a broader trend: a retreat from international protection obligations that has the greatest impact on those already at heightened risk.

In all regions, marginalized populations make up a disproportionate percentage of those forcibly displaced. Yet recent attacks on diversity, equity and inclusion have impeded our ability to effectively respond to the needs of these populations. We believe that it is not possible to achieve effective protection if inequalities in accessing services based on age, gender and diversity are not addressed. Those with the most acute and complex needs are those existing at the intersections of multiple forms of marginalization: as people who are displaced; are rendered stateless; are women and girls; are older; live with disabilities; are victims of gender-based violence; as well as those with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC).

Global studies estimate that around 9% of the population are from a SOGIESC minority, meaning there are over 11 million displaced LGBTIQ+ people around the world. This population faces heightened risk and systematic exclusion—often with fatal consequences. We must look at ourselves – all of us, working within the sector– and the culture we foster. Homophobia and transphobia are all around us, limiting delivery and accessibility.

The temptation in this era of budget cuts is to retreat — to limit the scope of our ambition, to scale back inclusion, to turn a blind eye to the most difficult contexts. But we must not shrink in the face of challenge; we must rise to meet it.

In this, we have much to learn from those who have always had to do this work with limited resources, and in the face of significant risks. Local organizations led by forcibly displaced persons – especially those led by marginalized groups such as stateless people, women, and LGBTQI+ communities – have been some of the hardest hit by the funding cuts. They are the bravest and most committed amongst us; and they are the experts in their own contexts. As we re-prioritize on reduced budgets, this must be done in consultation and with the guidance of these organizations, and the communities who have been hardest hit.

Dear Chair,

At this critical juncture, it is important that we, the humanitarian community, recognise that just because governments have reprioritized funding, this does not mean that the levels of suffering have reduced and we must uphold humanitarian principles.

To meet the scale of today's protection challenges, we urge UNHCR and its Member States to:

- Ensure funding is directed to local organisations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons especially in protection programming.
- Uphold the principles of age, gender and diversity inclusion in programming to ensure our ability to serve all people, and refuse to scale back commitments to reach all those in need.
- Continue to develop strategies to include SOGIESC minorities in response programming.
- Prioritize inclusive, equitable, and accountable approaches as non-negotiable in responses — not as rhetoric, but as a measurable and operational commitment.

Finally, we ask UNHCR to continue upholding protection as a core of your mandate, and we ask you, its Member States, to equally uphold your commitment to protecting *all* forcibly displaced and stateless persons.

This statement is available on icvanetwork.org

Thank you.