

NGO Statement on durable solutions and complementary pathways, including implementation of the ExCom conclusion

Dear Chair, distinguished delegates,

This statement is delivered on behalf of a wide range of NGOs, including RLOs.

In 2024, UNHCR's Executive Committee adopted Conclusion No. 117 on Durable Solutions and Complementary Pathways. This was an important advancement for refugee protection and an acknowledgement that expanding access to resettlement and complementary pathways saves lives. It was the first ExCom Conclusion to address complementary pathways in detail, and their crucial role as a facilitator of solutions, and reaffirmed commitments in the GCR.

We congratulate UNHCR and its Member States on this important achievement.

At the same time, we must be clear. Resettlement and complementary pathways are in crisis. They are more needed, and yet more scarce, than ever.

We encourage you, UNHCR's Member States, to take more decisive action to overcome the challenges we are facing, embracing more dynamic, long-term, and people-centered approaches.

We wish to stress the following:

First, on resettlement, there is a pressing need to expand refugee resettlement.

Current resettlement spaces cannot keep pace with global demand. Meeting this challenge will require stronger political will and collective action, with governments working alongside civil society, the private sector, businesses, and others. This commitment is all the more important as some actors have all but shut down their refugee resettlement programs. As a global resettlement community, we must ensure that we move forward.

Second, on complementary pathways, there is an increasing need for more flexible and creative approaches to expand pathways for family reunification, labour mobility, education, humanitarian admission, and private sponsorship. Over the past decade, complementary pathways have gained momentum, reflecting a shared commitment of States and non-traditional actors alike. We must continue to strengthen these to support better outcomes for refugees and communities that welcome them.

Dear Chair, we would like to highlight that the right to family unity is a fundamental human right, encompassing the right of families to live together, to seek reunification if separated, and to have their family life respected. For children, being reunited with loving family members is an integral part of their development, protection and safety. Reuniting separated families helps them to heal from trauma,

promotes successful integration, and prevents the need to resort to smugglers or irregular journeys to reunite with loved ones.

During the 2023 GRF, Member States and other stakeholders committed to take concrete measures to facilitate family reunification through a global Multistakeholder Pledge. This Pledge has the ambitious goal of helping at least one million refugees reunify by 2030 and is being supported by a Global Family Reunification Network.

While much has been accomplished since, yet, significant gaps remain to realize these ambitious commitments. We urge States to:

- Streamline processing and ease procedural requirements associated with family reunification;
- Reduce or remove the costs associated with applying for family reunification;
- Broaden the definition of “family” consistent with international guidance and recognize refugees’ own definitions of family, shaped by diverse cultural norms or bonds;
- Remove restrictions on who is able to access family reunification and provide adequate support with processing, including legal assistance.

Finally, NGOs stress that meaningful refugee participation and leadership is a critical cross-cutting foundation. The GCR underscores the importance of refugee inclusion and meaningful participation in decision-making. We emphasize that this must be done in an equitable and sustainable manner. RLOs play a crucial role in this.

In conclusion, as representatives of NGOs committed to advancing durable solutions, we urge States to put into practice the ExCom Conclusion for durable solutions and complementary pathways, , ensuring family unity and recognizing the leadership of RLOs.

We stand ready to support in putting these recommendations into action.

This statement is available on icvanetwork.org.

Thank you.