

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME 76th Plenary Session 6-10 October 2025

Review of the consultations with non-governmental organizations held in 2025

Speech delivered by NGO Rapporteurs:

- **Mr. Lukendo Mbokani**, Chief Executive Officer, Refugee-Led Organisation Network, Uganda
- **Ms. Núñez-Flores Rey**, Head of Humanitarian Advocacy, Save the Children International

Dear Chair, Excellencies, UNHCR and NGO colleagues,

We are honoured to report on UNHCR's global engagement with NGOs and on the Regional Consultations held this year.

For over thirty years, these consultations have reflected UNHCR's commitment to collaboration with NGOs and the Principles of Partnership. Even amid the challenges the sector faced in 2025, this engagement has endured, and strategic dialogue has remained a collective priority.

At the global level, UNHCR sustained its engagement with NGOs and civil society during 2025 through targeted and open sessions, including dedicated spaces for Refugee-Led Organisations. These discussions focused on advancing sustainable responses, operationalizing the Route-Based Approach, and addressing the evolving funding landscape. They reinforced the necessity of coordination and the inclusion of NGOs in shaping UNHCR's programmes.

Regionally, consultations in the **Americas, MENA, East Africa, Europe, and Asia-Pacific** brought together over **650 participants**, both online and in person. NGOs in all their diversity were represented—local, national, and international, networks, grassroots organizations, and organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons.

Dear Chair, Excellencies,

The regional consultations focused on the theme of **Safeguarding Asylum and Strengthening Protection**. During discussions, we recalled that every person fleeing persecution, conflict, or violence has the right to seek asylum and to access international protection. We strongly believe that the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol remain the best instruments for protection and are more essential than ever. We will support your efforts to ensure this remains the case.

The consultations reaffirmed that refugees are not only rights holders; they are agents of their own protection. Their voice, perspective, and expertise must be central to decision-making, programme design, and policy frameworks. We also recalled the importance of ensuring access to protection for internally displaced people and addressing statelessness.

Allow us to share some key recommendations from the regional consultations and to invite you to read the detailed reports that will be available online.

In the Americas, we encourage States, with the support of UNHCR and NGOs, to:

- **Enhance Refugee Status Determination procedures** and guarantee due process through modalities that comply with international standards.
- **Ensure effective access to information and asylum procedures**, particularly in border areas, supported by legal aid and guidance.
- **Strengthen coordination mechanisms** between asylum systems and institutional and community actors, building on existing regional frameworks.

For Europe, in a period of growing racism and xenophobia, NGOs highlighted the worrying trend of criminalising people forced to flee, and those defending them.

Recommendations towards Member States include:

- First, guarantee **clear, accessible, and fair asylum procedures**, supported by mobile or hybrid legal services in multiple languages.
- Second, provide **targeted training for authorities** on protection principles and the needs of marginalized groups.
- Third, establish **monitoring mechanisms for accountability** when violations occur; whether pushbacks, arbitrary detention, or denial of access to procedures.

In **Asia Pacific**, recommendations from NGOs for UNHCR and Member States include to:

- Support the **establishment and strengthening of national asylum systems** and statelessness procedures with adequate resources and capacity.
- **Promote access to territory, screening and referrals** of new arrivals with specific vulnerabilities and protection needs.

Dear Chair, Excellencies,

Under the theme of **safeguarding asylum and strengthening protection**, we also discussed the Route Based Approach in **Europe, Asia Pacific and East Africa**.

Mixed movements of refugees and migrants are not new. Yet, too many refugees are left without protection, safe pathways, or fair access to asylum. A coordinated multistakeholder approach is essential to uphold dignity, rights, and international protection.

Recommendations are directed to Member States, NGOs and UNHCR, in recognition that our collective action is needed to succeed:

- First, across regions, **strengthen cross-border coordination, harmonise procedures, referral systems, and case management** to ensure continuous protection.
- Second, formally **recognize the role of civil society in asylum systems**. In particular, **refugee-led and diaspora organisations** possess a comparative advantage in protecting people on the move.
- Thirdly, **addressing the root causes of unsafe onward movements must be central to programming**. This includes tackling economic hardship, registration suspension, limited or no access to asylum, conflict, and climate-related displacement in communities of origin.
- Finally, we urge you, Member States, to **expand third country solutions** to reduce reliance and pressure on dangerous routes. Resettlement programmes, which are critical protection and lifesaving tools for those most at risk, must be scaled and prioritised.

The unprecedented funding situation of this year drove us to focus on another sub-theme, the urgent need to protect and build on localisation gains globally.

Our reflections include:

- **Resourcing is urgent:** local actors who remain on the ground providing critical services need predictable, flexible funding now more than ever.
- Local actors must be empowered, and international actors “*must step back when appropriate, share space, and support local leadership with humility.*”
- In support of localisation, strengthened and meaningful refugee participation is recognised as a cross-cutting principle.

We would like to invite donors to engage in follow-up dialogues to address barriers for local actors in accessing funding.

Dear Chair, Excellencies,

Next year will mark the 75th anniversary of the 1951 Refugee Convention, a milestone that reminds us of the enduring commitment of States to safeguard protection, safety, and dignity. However, this year we have all witnessed the devastating consequences of funding cuts, coupled with growing restrictions on asylum, rising populism, and threats to multilateralism.

In this difficult context, we must remind and reemphasize to all stakeholders that the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) remains a critical global framework, rooted in solidarity, responsibility-sharing, and inclusive participation.

In December, the Global Refugee Forum progress review will be another reflection point to gather momentum, recommit to our collective goals, and push forward practical solutions. We encourage States to take-stock and report on their pledge implementation, show solidarity and highlight progress made. You can count on us to do the same.

To conclude:

Excellencies, Chair, our recommendations are grounded in humanity. They are not abstract policy points—they are about real people. Upholding rights requires courage, collaboration, and commitment. It demands that governments, civil society, and international partners work not only efficiently, but also compassionately, to ensure that dignity, protection, and hope are never denied to those who seek refuge.

The NGO community stand steadfast in defending the asylum space and looks forward to continued work with UNHCR and its Executive Committee to demonstrate what is possible when we uphold these principles together.

Thank you.