

NETWORK FOR REFUGEE VOICES
DECLARATION FOR EFFECTIVE AND SUSTAINABLE REFUGEE POLICY

1. We, refugees and refugee-led NGOs from Syria, under the umbrella Network for Refugee Voices, make the following declaration to contribute to processes and commitments aimed at reforming the international refugee system, including the Global Compact on Large Movement of Refugees and Migrants:
2. Affirming that for the purpose of this Declaration, the term “refugee” includes those of us who meet the refugee definition under the 1951 Refugee Convention, the 1967 Protocol and UNRWA’s definition, as well as those who are at risk of serious and individual harm as a result of targeted or indiscriminate violence in situations of international or national armed conflict and find themselves outside of the terms of the Refugee Convention.
3. Recognizing that refugees have agency, we have organized ourselves when forced to flee our homes and country, when faced with internment in camps or confronted with destitution, and when traveling across land and sea in search of safety and dignity.
4. Acknowledging the crucial role of refugees and refugee-led initiatives in expanding local economies, fostering innovation, building strong communities and filling gaps left by inadequate international crisis management and assistance.
5. Appreciating the life-saving relief and protection provided by host communities and host governments - whether signatories of the 1951 Convention or not - civil society leaders and groups, grassroots actors, solidarity movements, and humanitarian and aid agencies.
6. Lamenting that poor governance drove millions of refugees from our homes and that third-party failure to uphold international humanitarian law, as well as a continued lack of accountability, make establishing durable solutions difficult.
7. Recognizing that failed asylum policies and responses have kept refugees in protracted displacement, burdened host communities and resulted in the devastating rollback of human rights and liberties, including sustainable livelihoods.
8. Recognizing that an increasing number of States, while attempting to stem irregular migration, have implemented policies that segregate on the basis of employability effectively criminalizing all other forms of passage, including seeking refuge, while allowing only for marginal numbers to be resettled. These policies have left behind the most vulnerable and increased the onus on already overburdened States, most of which are developing countries.
9. Recognizing that the development of the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact on Migration presents an opportunity for the international community to improve its collective response

to large movements of migrants and refugees through the evaluation of the current global approach and the introduction of new mechanisms.

10. We, the Network for Refugee Voices, stress the need for urgent action at international, national and local levels to develop collective and innovative refugee policy to ensure an effective and sustainable coordinated global response to the refugee crisis.

CALL FOR ACTION

Systematically Incorporating Refugee Voices

1. We call on world leaders, especially those working to address the large movements of refugees and migrants in the form of the 2018 Global Compacts, to commit to the UN General Assembly declaration that all refugee policy must contain direct refugee input. Acknowledging that refugees have agency, our contribution is key to develop policies that are effective and sustainable.

Burden and Responsibility Sharing

2. We call on the international community to increase and coordinate burden sharing, by disclosing the selection criteria behind resettlement programs, encouraging all relevant actors to recognize regional sensibilities of both refugees and host communities and fostering regional ownership of refugee assistance and responsibility.

Reform of Refugee Response

3. We call on UN Agencies, Non-Governmental Organizations and humanitarian organizations, with mandates to protect and support refugees to include beneficiaries at every level of design and implementation of refugee-response programs.
4. We call on non-state actors, including local governments and municipalities, grassroots organizations, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations and the private sector to adopt a refugee-led approach to new innovations and initiatives designed improve the lives of refugees.

Upholding the SDGs for Refugees

5. We call on all actors, to include refugees in their commitment towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in line with the commitment to “Leave No One Behind”, and strengthen refugee-led initiatives.

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